THE PRIEST

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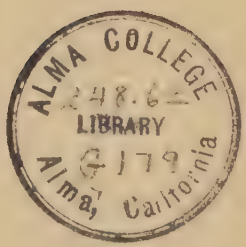
REV. EDWARD F. GARESCHÉ, S. J.

"Semper adde, semper ambula, semper profice: noli in via remanere, noli retro redire, noli deviare."
—*St. Augustine, Sermo clxix, n. 18.*



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TO

The Most Blessed Virgin Mary,
Mother of All Priests, Mediatrix
of All Graces

Grateful acknowledgments are made to the editor of *The Homiletic Monthly* and the editor of *The American Ecclesiastical Review,* for permission to reprint some of the chapters of this book which have been published in their pages; and also to The Loyola University Press, Chicago, for permission to reprint the poem "The Young Priest to His Hands."

THE AUTHOR

PREFACE

Notwithstanding the extreme importance of the subject, comparatively few books have been written in English about the priesthood. In fact, spiritual books for priests have not been very numerous. Yet few services which one can render the Church are more important than to aid, even in an humble way, the work of the priest or to help encourage him in the discharge of the loftiest and most exacting duties given to man.

The writer of this volume did not volunteer to undertake a book on the priesthood. He was asked to write a series of ascetical papers for priests, and these papers, which form the first twelve chapters of the book, were printed in the successive issues of the *Homiletic Monthly* during a year. The general topic chosen was *Sacerdos Alter Christus,* and so many priests expressed their grateful appreciation of the series that it has been thought worth while to print them in permanent form, with thirteen other chapters of which eleven have not before appeared in print.

One of the suggestions made more than once in the book itself is that we priests pray often for one another, and in the spirit of this suggestion we ask its readers to include in their masses and prayers an intention for all its other readers and for the writer as well.

E. F. G.

Feast of St. Patrick, 1930.

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I. SACERDOS ALTER CHRISTUS

IT is not the truths that a man merely knows which ennoble and elevate his conduct, but rather the truths that he realizes and carries into action. It is not the assent of the mind to great and holy thoughts which makes one holy, but the assent of the heart and will. The difference is vastly important. Every Christian, not to say every priest, knows far more than is needful to make him a saint. If any individual does not become saintly under the influence of the teachings of Christ, it is because he does not realize, and live out in practice, the things that he knows. This is, of course, a thought sufficiently familiar to us all. Yet, even this thought needs to be dwelt on and realized anew, time and time again.

Exercises in Realization

Sharing the common humanity of those about him, the priest needs, like other men, to make definite and frequent efforts and exercises in realization. Living closer to the eternal verities than do other men, he is, in a certain way, more likely to grow accustomed to these verities. Dwellers in the Alps, whose chalet perches on the side of some heaven-kissing hill, have always before them, morning, noon, and night, a panorama of sheer loveliness. But, after years in the presence of that stupendous scenery, some Alp-dwellers hardly give it a second glance.

Their whole spirit and attitude of mind may, of course, be tinged with freedom-loving and lofty emotions, because they have been reared in such surroundings. Mountaineers have a spirit of independence all their own. But the details of the glorious scenery have become so familiar that they are commonplace. Newcomers into their mountain ranges will spend hours watching the changes of light and shadow on the green valleys and over the blue lakes and on the white summits of snow-capped peaks. These newcomers have not had the constant inspiration of mountain scenery, but they feel a keener and more vivid joy because all is so gloriously new.

Is it not well for us to remember that custom and familiarity dull our appreciation of spiritual truths also, unless we often endeavor to realize and reflect on the beauty and holiness that encompass us? We can counteract the deadening influence of custom by exercises in realization. A poet or a painter, who constantly reflects on the beauty of nature, never loses the keen zest and joy he finds in its contemplation. On the contrary, after years of dwelling in the presence of the stupendous majesty of the hills, he can point out to a newcomer more varied beauties and appreciations than the unaccustomed eye could garner. It is well for us all to remind ourselves, and to be frequently reminded, to act in like manner toward spiritual things. *Sursum corda:* lift up your hearts and your eyes, and contemplate the glories of God in His holy priesthood.

The Perils of Routine

Not only custom, but routine also, is a great duller of appreciation. In the dedication of his book on the Blessed Eucharist as the center and inspiration of the sacerdotal life, Archbishop Lepicier implies this truth. "To newly ordained priests," he writes, "the well-beloved friends of the most Sacred Heart of Jesus, with the wish that they may always keep their holy transports of faith and devotion." Just after ordination, what ecstasies of appreciation fill the soul of the young priest!

But the human heart could hardly endure such transports during all the days of a long life. With many repetitions of the Holy Sacrifice, the priest must naturally grow accustomed to this sublime and heavenly rite. Yet, it is a great pity and a sad loss if routine makes the saying of Mass anything ordinary or commonplace. Though the priest, in after years, may never quite recapture the first fine rapture of his youthful devotion, still, by reflection and piety, he can keep up a steady fervour of devotion and overcome the deadening influence of routine.

The Wonder and Reverence of Ordination Day

Every priest will remember the wonder and reverence with which he regarded his own self, anointed and transformed by the sacerdotal character. On one ecstatic day he awoke without the sacerdotal powers, but on that happy evening he fell asleep, "the

anointed of the Lord." His hands had been lifted up for the first time, with the hands of the consecrating bishop, in the oblation of Christ's Body and Blood. He knew that henceforth he was sealed with the indelible mark of the ambassador of Christ. He contemplated his own hands, and saw beneath them the hands of Christ. We have endeavored to express those sentiments of the heart of the young priest in some verses, which we ask leave to reproduce here:

THE YOUNG PRIEST TO HIS HANDS[1]

Time was when ye were powerless
To shrive and sign, anoint and bless.
Claspëd, ye worshipped from afar
That Host, as distant as a star.
Your palms were barren still, and cold.
Ye might not touch, ye might not hold,
God, Whom the signs of bread enfold.

But now—ah! now—most happy hands,
Ye fold the Saviour's swaddling bands,
Ye lift His tender limbs, and keep
The snowy bed where He doth sleep.
His Heart, His Blood, His Being fair—
All God and Man is in your care!
Ye are His guardians everywhere.

Ye pour the wine, ye break the bread,
For the great Supper, sweet and dread!
Ye dress the rood of sacrifice,
Whereon the morning Victim lies,
And when my trembling accent calls,
Swift leaping from His Heaven's walls,
On you the Light of Glory falls!

[1]From "The Torrent and Other Poems," Loyola University Press, Chicago.

You are the altar, where I see
The Lamb that bled on Calvary.
As sacred as the chalice shrine,
Wherein doth glow the Blood divine,
As sacred as the pyx are ye,
Oh happy hands—an angel's fee!—
That clasp the Lord of Majesty!

The Consecration of Christ's Ministers

Such verse but feebly expresses the rapturous realization of the heart of a young priest, that now he is, indeed, "another Christ." Not alone are his hands consecrated to lift up to heaven the Body and Blood of Jesus, as a sacrifice to the Eternal Father, but his lips are as the lips of Christ, to speak the words of absolution in the sacrament of penance, to utter Christ's words of witness and of blessing of the contract of marriage, to speak the solemn formula of anointing and help in extreme unction, to pronounce the very words of Christ as the baptismal water flows on a newborn child of God, to speak the truth of God from the pulpit and to murmur words of counsel in the confessional—in a word, to utter Christlike speech, in Christ's own name, to Christ's people through perhaps a long and labor-blessed life. His ears are as the ears of Christ to the faithful, who speak to him as to their Lord in the sacrament of confession, telling their sins and their sorrows together, as they would have uttered them into the ears of the Man-God when He walked visibly on earth conversing with man. "The soul of the priest," says

St. John Chrysostom, "should be more pure than the sunbeam. Pure must be those hands, which handle the Lord! Pure must be the tongue, which speaks the consecrating Words!" (*De Sacerdotio,* VI, 4.)

It is told of some great saints that, after they had received Holy Communion, their countenances wonderfully changed, losing their commonplace features and shining with the beauty and divinity of the Face of Christ Himself, as though through the dim veil of their flesh the glory of their Guest and Lover shone forth as in a lantern. So, too, the young priest is transformed before the Catholic people. The playmates of his boyhood look on him now in a new character. The members of his own family regard him with new reverence. Even his father and his mother kneel down before their own son and ask his blessing. It is because, with the eyes of faith, they see in him Christ, shining through his commonplace personality. *Sacerdos Alter Christus*—the greater the faith, the greater the realization of the Catholic people, the more reverence they have for the priest.

An Incomprehensible Dignity

Yet, neither the young priest himself nor the devout Catholic people, who reverence his newly gained character of the priesthood, can ever fathom the true depths of meaning in those stupendous words which proclaim that the priest is "another Christ." Not until the light of eternity brings its keen clearness of realization shall we appreciate the dignity of

the priesthood, nor even then will that appreciation be proportioned to the greatness of the reality.

We never can fully comprehend the elevation of our human nature through the mystery of the Incarnation, because this comprehension would involve an element of infinity. So also we shall never realize in full the dignity of the priesthood, because to be "another Christ" is also to have to do with the infinite majesty of God, which we never can comprehend. Surely the priest, above other men, can savour those mighty words of St. Leo the Great, in his *Sermo XXXI De nativitate Domini.* "Be aware, O Christian, of thy dignity, and do thou, who hast become a sharer in the divine nature, refuse to sink back to thy former vileness by an unworthy life. Remember Who is thy Head, and to Whose Body thou dost belong. Call to mind, that, snatched from the power of darkness, thou hast been transported into the light and the kingdom of God."

Indeed, after the Incarnation itself and the divine maternity, is not the priesthood the highest dignity given to mankind? In the mystery of the Incarnation, a human nature was hypostatically united with the Divine nature of the Son of God, so that the Word was truly made flesh and dwelt amongst us. This unique assumption of a human nature by the Son of God resulted in the stupendous mystery of one Divine Person with two natures, so that the Son of God is truly the Son of the Virgin Mary and the Son of the Virgin Mary is truly the Son of God. Thus, as we all

know, the human nature of Christ is not a person, but the person of the Son of God looks forth from His human nature, God speaks with a human voice, comforts and heals us with human hands, which are the hands of God.

The Character of Holy Orders

By his ordination the priest is, of course, not hypostatically united with God, yet, the Sacrament of Orders imprints on his soul a real spiritual character—the sacramental character of the priesthood, which does anoint, consecrate, and elevate the being of the priest to the sublime height of ambassador of Christ. By virtue of this spiritual character—a real and physical character—imprinted by the sacrament, the priest is now *Alter Christus*—another Christ, the personal representative of Jesus.

The Consecration of Christ's Ambassadors

The nature of the priest, his body and his soul, are not assumed by the Divine Word substantially, as were the human body and soul of Christ, but they are taken by Christ to be His representative, His instrument, His agent, the means by which He ministers to His people. Now and from henceforth the voice of this man will be as the voice of Christ, endowed with the power of forgiving sins, of comforting the sick, of blessing marriage, of baptizing, of consecrating; that power which Christ Himself had by nature, the priest now possesses according to Christ's own delegation, in the way and to the extent that

Christ has established and declared. The feet of the priest will be as the feet of Christ, seeking the sheep that are lost, shepherding and guiding the flock. Wherever the priest shall go in his sacerdotal ministry, there will be the power of Christ. All the seven sacraments are the material actions of Jesus, actions which He performs by the hands of bishops and priests. When the Eternal Father sees the priest performing the actions enjoined by Christ and using Christ's words in His name with priestly power, this spectacle moves the heart of the Eternal Father to forgive sins, to impart graces, to accomplish the thing signified by the sacramental words of Christ.

The Realization of Stupendous Truths

Thus, the priest is "another Christ," in deed and in truth, in efficacy and in accomplishment. He bears forever with him the power and the character of Jesus, the Son of God, the Saviour of mankind. How good and sweet and holy and helpful it is to the priest to realize more and more, to keep vivid and actual, the realization of those stupendous truths! They are immensely practical truths. They are full of incentives to Christlike living. Even at his best, the holiest priest will always be conscious of a deep unworthiness to bear so sublime a character. In the mystery of the Incarnation the human nature assumed by the Son of God received the unction of the Divinity, and was forever preserved from the slightest shadow of fault or the remotest stain of sin. But the priest

remains a mere man—surrounded, it is true, with graces, and watched by the special Providence of God, yet a man, with a will weak and wayward, and an intelligence feeble and dull in comparison to the excellence of his tremendous mission and ministry.

Our Dependence on Jesus

The priest, therefore, more than other men, has to cast himself upon the mercy and guidance of God. He has to depend on Jesus for even more than do other men—for more strength, more help, more light, more guidance. He must live closer to the Sacred Heart. He must use to the full the means of grace. He must stir up in his soul perpetually a firm faith, an ardent hope, a never-wearying charity. His prudence, his justice, his temperance and fortitude must support and guide and rule, not his own soul alone, but the souls of many others, in Christ's name. His Christlike innocence and his Christlike charity are needed for the very life of some of the souls intrusted to his care. The thirst for souls, which consumed the soul of Christ, Christ's zeal for the conversion of the world, Christ's spirit of prayer, His love of His Blessed Mother, His zeal for the souls of the young, His perfect humility, and His unbounded ambition for the glory of His Heavenly Father—these things, too, must be in the heart of the priest, if he is to be, in reality and in truth, *Alter Christus*—another Christ.

The Holy Fathers on the Priesthood

St. Jerome, in his *Ep. XIV ad Heliodorum,* and St. John Chrysostom, in his often-quoted treatise *De Sacerdotio,* both praise the dignity of the priesthood in famous and burning eulogies: Most memorable is that passage in St. John Chrysostom where he describes the scene, the heavenly and blissful scene, at Mass, when the Lord of Glory Himself lies a victim on the altar, when the priest, in his matchless dignity, is praying and offering up the saving Sacrifice, while the people, the Faithful of Christ, join in his offering, their lips crimsoned with the priceless Blood of the Lamb of God. While he is offering up the Eucharistic Sacrifice, bright throngs of angels surround that happy minister, and the choir of the celestial songsters is chanting the deathless praises of the Victim without stain. Then the saint recalls that beautiful vision of an old man who, at the moment of the consecration, saw a great majestic company of bright, adoring angels, in the resplendent robes of heaven, ringed about the altar, with bowed heads, like soldiers who stand in awe before their Emperor. (*De Sacerdotio,* VI, 4.)

He Has Chosen Us

Is it not worthy and just, rightful and acceptable, both to God and to man, to dwell on these thoughts, to taste them, to digest them, to be nourished on them, to think again and again of the sublime character, the glorious dignity, the joyful tasks, the great commission which every priest has received from the very

Heart of Jesus Christ? We have not chosen Him, but He has chosen us. He has laid His hands upon us. He has blessed us and consecrated us to a dignity near to His own dignity. Of all human beings, we have the most of His kingly power, of His divine task of charity, and we have His own mission—the most Godlike of all works He can give to man—the work of saving souls. *Noblesse oblige.* Such a stupendous dignity imposes immense obligations. Let us encourage ourselves and each other; let us cry out with the awakened Paul: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" May the splendor and the beauty, the holiness and tenderness of Christ cover us like a mantle!

If all Christians should have these sentiments, and should desire to follow Christ most closely, surely we, above all, should be distinguished for Christlikeness, for we have on our souls not only the indelible character of baptism, not only the seal of confirmation, to make us, the one the child of God, the other His warrior; we have besides that most Christlike impress, that singular jewel of the soul, the priestly character, imprinted by Holy Orders, which makes us in very deed *Alter Christus*—another Christ.

II. THE FAITH OF THE PRIEST

IT is difficult to find words strong enough to express the importance to the priest of a vivid and realizing faith. Like every virtue, faith has many degrees of perfection—steps, as it were, in the ladder of Jacob by which we can mount up toward the skies. The essential assent of faith—to believe whatever the Church believes and teaches because it is revealed by God, Who can neither deceive nor be deceived—is, of course, necessary for salvation. Faith is a supernatural virtue infused into us by baptism, and the loss of it is a fatal misfortune. But the intellectual adhesion to the truths of faith, firm though it be, may yet amazingly lack influence and efficacy to make us holy, unless we realize keenly and deeply the truths to which we adhere.

Vivid and Energizing Faith

It is realizing, vivid, energizing faith that influences our daily actions. The priest, above all men, should pray for, work for, and insist on having a vivid, energizing faith. We do not always realize that such is at the very foundation of all holiness. The saints were saints, of course, because they loved God so heroically, but this very love is founded on faith. Faith puts us in touch, so to say, with the divine, makes God real to us, lays the foundation for our love of God and our faithful service.

Our will is never moved except through the apprehension and realization of some good to be acquired.

A thousand lesser goods are presented to us through our senses, and they appeal to us, allure us, invite us with vivid reality. What we see and hear comes home to us with a realization that is spontaneous. Since we are surrounded with the things of matter and time, these things take up our attention, distract us, attract us.

The Evidence of Things Unseen

Now, to live a Christlike life in the midst of a world such as ours, requires a counterbalancing realization of the eternal truths, of spiritual things. This contact with spiritual things, this grasping and holding to them, this apprehension of their relative importance and their meaning, is had through faith. The stronger and more vivid our faith, the more we lay hold of, possess, and live with the things unseen.

The Limitations of Our Sense Perception

It is difficult to put such things into words, but every priest who reflects upon this subject will see its extreme importance. St. Teresa of Avila once remarked that the reason why it is so difficult for us to become friends with God is, that His nature is so different from ours. Our powers of reflection are so great, and our mental life is so keen that we sometimes forget our real situation. Each one of us is in a little prison, the prison of the flesh, which has only five windows. Our consciousness assures us only of the things that happen within us. Outside this little cell which we call the body, we can obtain

immediate knowledge of those objects only that send off vibrations of light (which affect our eyes) or vibrations of sound (which affect our ears), or offer resistance to our touch, or affect our taste or smell.

All the direct knowledge we have within us of exterior things has come through these five doors of the senses, and these senses of ours are continually reporting only material phenomena. Yet, during all our waking hours, there is a perfect bombardment of impressions, sensations, and impulses from without us. The eternal truths—God, heaven, the world of the blessed—have to be apprehended by faith, seized hold of, and realized by intellectual effort. They do not impress us and obsess us as do material phenomena. Unless we strive to realize with a vivid faith the eternal truths, those truths become distant, dim, faint motives of action, intellectually apprehended, but of little force to move the will.

The Worlds of Sense and of Spirit

The priest, like all other men, thus lives in two worlds, the world of sense and the world of spirit. With the world of sense he is intimately acquainted. It touches him on all sides, it invites, it insists, it distracts him. But the world of spirit, though equally real, does not find access to his senses. It is by faith that he knows most surely of the existence of this world. It is by virtue of his realizing faith that the universe of spiritual things can move him and influence him. Hence, the greater the faith of the

priest, the more real and moving does the world of spiritual things become to him.

Strengthen your faith, make real your faith, and you will become more and more spiritual-minded. The motives for a holy and priestly life will become to you more and more moving and insistent. This world will grow to seem of less and less consequence, less and less attractive and distracting. The more firmly you believe, the more vividly you realize what you believe, the nearer you will come to Christ, and the more you will acquire God's outlook on the universe.

The Teaching of the Transfiguration

It has always seemed to me that the mystery of the Transfiguration is a vivid parable of the power of faith to clear the eyes of the soul.

> "And after six days Jesus taketh unto Him Peter and James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart:
>
> "And He was transfigured before them. And His face did shine as the sun: and His garments became white as snow.
>
> "And behold there appeared to them Moses and Elias talking with Him.
>
> "And Peter, answering, said to Jesus: 'Lord, it is good for us to be here: if Thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles, one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.'" (Matt. xvii. 1-4.)

When our Lord thus took Peter and James and John apart up into a high mountain, He walked with them showing the garb and countenance with which He was known to men. The light of His divinity

was concealed. Looking upon Him as He passed, we should have beheld only a poor man, poorly clad, noble of demeanour, a Son of David, but still the foster-son of the carpenter, a simple man of the people, not Godlike in the splendour of His garments, the majesty of His retinue, but a companion of poor fishermen. But He was transfigured before them. Then His face shone like the sun in the heavens, intolerably bright with the majesty of the Godhead. Then His garments became white as snow, nor was all the glory of Solomon so beautiful as the robe of Christ, touched with that beauty from heaven. Then Peter answering said to Jesus: "Lord, it is good for us to be here." The realization of his Master's divinity was strong upon him. Such beauty made him thirst to abide forever in the presence of his transfigured Lord. He realized what before he had only believed.

It Is Good for Us to Be Here

In some such way, the priest may go about his duties with a workaday faith, taking simply for granted and believing in the presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist, walking before Him day by day with little realization of what it means to stand so near the Incarnate Word—to be so often in the presence of the Joy and Light of heaven. But when a realizing, vivid faith comes into the heart of the priest, then all that pertains to the Blessed Sacrament assumes a new beauty and glory. Then the Eucharistic Christ, with all that belongs to His service, is transfigured to the eyes of the soul.

Things that seem lowly in themselves—the patient ministry of the altar and of the confessional, the visiting of the sick, the comforting of the sorrowful—with everything that has to do with Christ, are touched with a light from heaven. "He was transfigured before them." The eyes of such a realizing faith see things as they are, and not as they seem. By this sort of faith the whole life of the priest, his daily ministry, his simplest toils, are transfigured and glorified. His faithful heart cries out with Peter: "Lord, it is good for us to be here."

We all know these things, yet we do not all realize them as we should. One is tempted to take faith for granted, and not to remember or consider how very many degrees there are in realizing faith, nor how much, by our efforts and prayers, we can increase in the strength and realization of our belief. It is well for us all often to recall the things that help us to acquire such a vivid faith.

Prayer for a Realizing Faith

First, of course, in importance and efficacy comes prayer; humble, earnest, honest, persevering, loving prayer for an increase of faith. "Lord, I do believe, help Thou my unbelief. Lord, give me a vivid, realizing, active faith." This should be one of the chief intentions of the priest, both for himself and for his flock. If we pray rightly for such an increase of faith, our prayer will surely be answered. We may pray for many other things without knowing whether

they are for God's glory or our own good. But it cannot be that an increase of such vivid, active faith is not for God's glory and our good. The Sacred Heart of Jesus must desire, with intense yearning, to have all His priests constantly increase in such a faith.

Our Saviour is hindered from pouring forth upon us the efficacious graces we need, therefore, only by our slowness in asking for them. "Ask," He says to us, "this vivid, realizing faith, and you shall surely receive it; seek it and you shall find it; knock upon the door of My generosity, and it will certainly be opened unto you." For surely, when there is question of an increase of divine faith, he that asketh always receiveth, he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it is ever opened.

Humble and Persevering

Our prayer for a great increase of faith must, of course, like all prayer, be humble and persevering. It must be accompanied, too, by such efforts on our part as will dispose us to receive the favour we ask. The priest who sincerely desires a great increase of faith will make all his actions tend to such an increase.

The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, with all its beautiful prayers of faith, with its acts of faith, with its sublime mystery of faith, the unbloody repetition of Calvary, is a priceless aid toward vivid faith. The priest who prepares well, by fervent acts of faith, for

the offering of the Holy Sacrifice, who frequently renews during the Mass his vivid faith, will increase day by day in this sublime virtue. But he who says Mass thoughtlessly, or without due preparation, who fails to revivify deliberately his faith to the utmost before and during and after Holy Mass, misses one of the greatest of his opportunities.

The Efficacy of the Holy Office

The reading of the Holy Office should likewise be a daily exercise in faith. This sublime prayer of the Church is a sustained act of divine faith. The Psalms of David, vibrant with faith and love, the writings from the Fathers of the Church (those deep wells of realizing faith from which the soul of the priest can drink the ardent faith of apostolic days), the prayers for faith, the examples of the saints whose faith shines out in the nocturns of the office—these are all so many fountains which gush forth their strong waters for the soul of the priest. To say the Office hastily or thoughtlessly is, therefore, not only a pitiful personal fault; it is a missing of an immense opportunity. Before we begin the Divine Office, we should breathe a little prayer that it may be to us an increase of faith for all time.

The Influence of Reading on Faith

For this reason also, as well as for many others, every priest should strictly supervise his own reading, and see to it, first, that he take no needless liberties

with the spirit of faith within him, and, second, that he feed that spirit day by day with worthy and nourishing thoughts that will strengthen and build up the faith within him. Much of the literature of the day is agnostic, and it tends, therefore, to weaken faith. Just as our faith may be strengthened and made vigorous and virile by exercise and with the nourishment of good reading, so it may be weakened, injured, by injudicious choice of books.

We are not speaking here of the actual loss of faith through reading, which, thanks be to God, is a rare calamity with priests; but one may still keep the faith and find it very much lessened in its influence on one's life through the corrosive power of agnostic books. We all know the old principle that, when a man has the duty of reading dangerous literature or when duty calls him to run into any danger, God's Providence will protect him. But those who go into danger without need take their fate into their own hands.

The Antidote of Spiritual Reading

Still, with the best of good will, everyone nowadays must come in contact with a great deal of unbelief and doubt and mental unrest in matters of religion. It is wise, therefore, contantly to take an antidote against the weakening of the faith which would else result from such continuous contacts. This antidote is to be found, of course, in spiritual reading. We shall speak hereafter concerning this source of

priestly fervour. Suffice it now merely to mention its great importance in a well-ordered day.

For the Sake of the People

Not only from the standpoint of his own personal holiness, but from that of the welfare of his people, the faith of the priest is of tremendous import and influence. There is no evading the pitiless truth of the old saying: *"Nemo dat quod non habet."* There is a time-honoured saying which applies to the faith of the priest as to all the other elements of holiness within him. "If the priest is a saint," the saying goes, "his people will be holy. If the priest is holy, his people will be good. If the priest is good, his people will be fair. If the priest is fair, his people will be mediocre. If the priest is mediocre, his people will be bad."

Priests must always keep at least one degree above those whom they wish to influence. Where the soul of the priest is full of vivid, realizing faith, where his life is holy with the influence of such faith, then the faith of his people will be good and strong. As guardian of the faith of his people and the director of his flock, the priest has, therefore, an additional motive for using every means to cultivate in his soul this sublime virtue to the highest pitch of strength, fervour, and realization of which his being is capable. One of the most ardent prayers of the priestly heart should surely be this: "Lord, I believe, help Thou my unbelief."

III. THE HOPE OF THE PRIEST

"WE live by admiration, hope, and love," says Wordsworth, and, as poets often do, he here achieves a flash of insight into the deeper secrets of life. The real joy of living, life in its finest compass, springs from our admiration of the good and the beautiful, from our hope and our love. To the Christian, a realizing faith gives rise to the admiration spoken of by the poet. It is those truths of faith which we grasp, digest, and live by, that we admire. Faith, hope, and love are the finest actions of our spirit. Supernatural faith, hope, and love enable us to lay hold on God and to enjoy some foretaste of the vision beatific. We have already spoken of the faith of the priest, and hinted at the great part played by faith in building sanctity.

"Faith," declares St. Paul, "is the substance of things to be hoped for, the evidence of things that appear not." (Heb. xi. 1.) A beautiful and luminous saying of the great Apostle, and it points out to us how hope must build on faith, and how closely linked together are the three great theological virtues. By faith we lay hold on the substance of divine truths, which are the motives for our hope. The substance of things hoped for is brought to us by faith. In order, therefore, that we may hope strongly, we must believe firmly and realize what we believe. A great hope was never built on a weak

faith. If faith be dim and faltering, hope will be slight and wavering.

The Nature and Power of Hope

All of us, priests, instructed in theology, know the nature and the power of the great virtue of hope. Hope is a lifting up of the heart, a definite expectation of salvation from the Lord and of the means to attain salvation. It brings strength to the will to resist evil manfully, to do good valiantly, to serve God faithfully. It preserves the soul alike from presumption and despair—presumption, the tempting of God's wrath, and despair, a deep injury to His goodness. It is a joyful virtue, cordial, inspiriting. It makes hard labours light and rough ways easy; it sweetens trials and comforts weariness. For all Christians it is most desirable to possess this splendid virtue in its greatest perfection, to profit by its strength and ardour, to cultivate it to the most excellent degree. But to the priest in particular, for his own spiritual welfare and for the good of his flock, how necessary, how precious, how indispensable is a great, unfaltering, light-giving, strength-conferring hope!

Like faith and charity, this virtue is, we know, infused into us at baptism. It is a supernatural virtue, which no unaided effort of our own could ever gain; but, once infused into our souls by God's great goodness, we can cultivate it indefinitely, raise it to greater and greater perfection, in much the same way as we cultivate and increase in our soul the virtues

of faith and of charity. Let us dwell awhile on the excellence and necessity of a great habit of hope to the priest, so as to encourage ourselves to cultivate this priceless treasure of the priestly heart.

Priestly Courage

The priest needs courage. Of all men, he has undertaken an unearthly mission. In the full glow of youth, when life was pleasant and the future the colour of roses, we have each of us stood before the altar of God and vowed lifelong fidelity to Christ through all lights and shadows, until death comes to release us from our Christlike ministry. We have undertaken duties, ties, obligations, which are impossible to unaided nature, and which try man's spirit and weary his flesh to accomplish them faithfully until the end.

It is easy, indeed, to give the solemn pledges of the priesthood. But it is hard to pay them to the last farthing, day by day and year by year. The priest must be Christ's other self, not only through the calm days of Nazareth, but in dusty highways, amid the jostling multitudes, through the weariness of His public ministry, and in the wrestling with God for mercy upon men during the silent watches of prayer.

We may apply to priests what Horace says of poets, that neither God nor man nor the lettered columns of memory will suffer them to be mediocre men, half-hearted in their service. No man is bound to take on himself this tremendous consecration. But,

having entered the holy ranks of the priesthood and undertaken the ambassadorship of Christ, a man has given inviolable pledges to be faithful and holy. For all that, the human heart is weak, and will grow weary unless the great cordial of hope stirs it up and helps it on with the expectation of joy to come.

What the Priest Renounces

The priest, by his office and mission, is cut off from many of those human consolations which hearten and help along other men. He has given up, for the love of God, the innocent and homely consolations of domestic life, and has become, like Melchisedech, a man without a family—walking alone with God even in the midst of multitudes, set apart to offer sacrifice, and himself a sacrifice, like Christ, his Master. He is separated, too, from the joy of competition with other men in business and in society, which gives a zest to the natural human life about him. But God, Who has suffered him to be deprived of some of the incentives of human effort, the supports of human weakness, has in return enriched him with a greater hope than is given to other men. "Thou art a priest forever." Be faithful in your holy ministry, suffer a little while, labour a little while, and consider with hope the calm and unending joys which Jesus will give you, also in a little while, when this brief space of troubled living is over.

In a Little While It Will Be Eternity

I must venture to recall again in this connection an illustration which I have elsewhere used in writing for our Catholic people, but which is far more moving when brought to the notice of the priest. In a secluded district, in a locality wild and barren by nature, a community of prayerful monks have raised their monastery, so as to find both labour and penance in subduing the natural wildness of the place by their toil, and making it blossom like the rose. To see them in their wearisome life, is in itself a lesson in patience and endurance. Their labour is hard and monotonous. They rise at a very early hour, toil in the fields all day, and return at night, spent in body and limb. Yet, they recite the Divine Office together, and rise at midnight to sing the praises of God. They speak seldom, they pray and labour long. "How can they endure such a life," asks many a visitor to the monastery. But the good monks have placed the answer over the door of their monastery where all may read it. As we lift our eyes, we read above the portal the solemn words: *"Bientôt l'éternité!"*—"In a little while it will be eternity!" In a little while, these toils and sorrows, this weariness and self-denial, this crucifixion of the flesh, and this striving of the spirit, will have given place to the bright, unending joys of a life without shadow and without alloy.

Strength and Cheer

This thought is full of strength, of consolation, of cheering power for everyone who is endeavouring to

do the will of Christ and to walk in His footsteps. In a little while it will be eternity. In a little while Christ Himself will be our reward, exceeding great, and God will exert the powers of His omnipotence to make us happy forever. We shall be joyous without admixture of any sorrow or pain, to the full limits of our capacity—and forever, world without end!

Who has greater prospects of happiness, who is more sure of the rewards of Christ than the faithful priest, steadfast to his duty, holy in his life? He has given up all that would have been his on earth in the ordinary career of a layman in order to consecrate himself to the work of saving and of sanctifying souls. He has drawn as near to Christ as a mortal can approach, has given his hands to be like the hands of Christ, his feet to carry Christ to the people, his ears to hear in the place of Christ, his lips to utter for Christ the words of consecration, of pardon, or of healing, according as Christ desires. He has given his body and his soul to be the living shrine and sanctuary of Jesus. He is no more himself; he will never again be regarded in his own person. Both to the friends and enemies of Jesus, he bears the character of his Master. He is Christ's; he is "another Christ."

A Reward Proportionately Great

For such a renunciation, such a service, the bounty of God will surely prepare a reward of proportionate magnificence. If it is said of every child of God that eye hath not seen nor ear heard nor hath it entereth

into the mind of man to conceive the joys that God has prepared for those who love Him, what splendours of munificence, what inconceivable excesses of generosity, will not the bounty of the Father shower down on those men, who above others, have been most like Christ in their lives on earth! They have faithfully and devotedly preached Him in the pulpit and by example; they have defended His teachings, have forgiven sins in His name, have comforted the sorrowful, have counseled the doubtful. They have anointed the sick, have offered up daily the unbloody Sacrifice, have sought out the sinner in the highways and byways, have baptized, have instructed, have watched over the young and the innocent. It is they, too, who have borne the insults directed against Christ's ministers, and have been faithful to the end in the ministry imparted to them by the laying on of the sacred Hands of Christ.

How Hope Is Strengthened

When we ask ourselves how we can strengthen and increase in us this virtue of hope, we must answer that it is by the same means precisely as we have outlined in the speaking of the increase of the virtue of faith. First in importance and efficacy comes earnest prayer, that desire and pleading of the heart which has for its motive the wish to be nearer to God, to serve Him better, to be more worthy of Christ, our King. The daily prayers of the priest, and especially the Mass and the Holy Office, gone through with

fervour and attention, must be immensely powerful with God.

We shall do well to include in each Mass, in the intention of every Office, a most fervent prayer for the increase of our hope as well as of our faith and charity. Let each of us pray likewise for all other priests throughout the world, that their hearts may be lifted up and cheered to great endeavours for Christ by an ardent, living, cordial hope, the vivid expectation, the confident desire of the great rewards of God and of all the aid that is necessary to obtain them, from the mercy of Jesus Christ.

Indeed, we shall always do well in all our prayers to include a very fervent and special intention for the spiritual welfare of all fellow priests throughout the world. The pious faithful are accustomed to pray often and fervently for priests. It was an intention that St. Teresa of Avila loved dearly, as did her little Sister, St. Thérèse of the Infant Jesus, recently canonized. But priests themselves, especially, should pray often and earnestly for other priests. It is we, above all others, who should intercede with God for our own brother priests, for we best know how much they are in need of constant intercession, how many graces they must have, how much support and strength and guidance they need from Almighty God to persevere and succeed in their holy ministry. And God will hear us more readily when *we* plead for them, because they are our brethren, stamped with the same character, invested with the same powers, and pos-

sessed of the same august mission to be "other Christs." Thus, when we ask for ourselves a great increase of hope, let us ask also from Almighty God that our fellow priests may be blessed with a like increase, and may be strengthened, consoled, and encouraged by the fullness of divine hope, the confident expectation of God's help here and of His reward hereafter.

The Practice of Hope

The second great means of increasing in hope is the exercise of that sublime virtue, the lifting of our hearts to contemplate with joy the great rewards which God has in store for us. There are some generous souls who do not wish to be moved by the expectation of reward for their service of God, but do they consider that this reward is no other than God Himself, Whom we cannot help but desire to possess completely and forever? This is the ultimate motive of our yearning. Our heart is forever unsatisfied until we possess the fullness of the Divine Beauty. All our cravings, whether we realize it or not, tend ultimately to that Infinite Being for Whom our hearts yearn. To desire the rewards of God is, therefore, to desire God Himself and thus to do honour to His Divine Majesty.

How little real joy and comfort even some holy people reap from the contemplation and expectation, from the ardent hope of God's rewards so exceedingly great! They have a very distant, dim apprehension of the real and near delights of heaven. Earthly

advantages stir and move them, but the immense exulting felicity of heaven gives them hardly any joy. They accept the fact that in heaven God will make them perfectly happy, but for lack of realization this ecstatically joyful truth has little practical influence in making their lives more cheerful. Priests, who share the human nature of other men, often come into this category. They believe in heaven, without at all realizing what it means. Their prayerful thought is seldom bent in rejoicing contemplation upon the next world and its peaceful happiness. For this reason they lose two great advantages: first, they miss the personal cheer, strength, and courage which comes from an ardent hope, from a realizing hope; second, and of more far-reaching consequence still, they lack the influence over others which their own fervent hope would give. How can they speak convincingly about the joys of heaven, when they seldom think of those joys and have little savour thereof? How can they lift up the hearts of others, when their own hearts do not dwell on high? To be sure, no one can imagine nor conceive the bliss of heaven, but by pious meditation, by comparison and analogy we can gain a joy and anticipation, at the consoling thought of that celestial holiday, and can taste and digest the texts of Holy Scripture concerning it.

More Fear Than Hope

With too many persons, priests among their number, religion is more a matter of fear than of hope.

They apprehend God much more easily as a wrathful avenger than as the loving, gentlest Father. They find it much more facile to conjure up the punishments of God than His rewards. Now it is true that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and that a prudent hope is always mingled with some honest fear of the Most High. Yet, it becomes future citizens of heaven, who have a God-made-Man as their Saviour, to walk happily through the shadows of this world.

Whoever has the fullness of divine hope cannot be downcast, miserable, or gloomy. Least of all men, should the priest be wanting in the joy that comes from hope, for he has left all things to follow Christ, and has heard the words addressed by our Lord to St. Peter, assuring him that those who leave all things for His sake shall have a hundredfold in this world, and in the world to come, life everlasting.

Presumption and Despair

From the two sins against hope, presumption and despair, the priest should pray likewise, and with great fervour, to be delivered. Perhaps presumption is a greater danger than despair in our present day. Time was when men exaggerated the sternness and anger of God, and withered away with fear when in truth they were leading holy lives, pleasing to the Divine Goodness. Nowadays the mercy and kindness of God, His long-suffering and forgiveness, are better and better understood. But terrible indeed is the

wrong and pitiful the shame of those who take advantage of the revelation of God's mercy to abuse that tender mercy by presumption. A word on this subject is all that need be said. The generosity of our own heart and our gratitude for God's goodness will make us detest the shadow of seeming to presume on His infinite goodness or take advantage of His mercy.

So much and no more can we say in this brief compass concerning the hope of the priest. But a word to the wise is sufficient. Where the woods are dry and the branches ready, a little flame, laid to the leaves, can send a great conflagration, flaming and sparkling through the forests.

IV. THE CHARITY OF THE PRIEST

CHARITY, as we know so well, means love, and love is the master passion of human nature. Men have done, and will do, things for love which are heroic and noble beyond the inspiration of any other passion. Love is the characteristic act of the will, and the will is the master faculty of human nature. We all are swayed and moved by love to a degree that we ourselves hardly realize. But our love, the inclination of our will, reaches out toward different objects. It leans toward our own self, and then we have self-love, which may be good and moderate, or evil and excessive. It leans toward other creatures, for the excellence which we perceive in them, and it leans toward God, Who is in Himself the most lovable of all beings. But here on earth His lovableness is not perceived in such a way that He irresistibly attracts our hearts as He will in heaven.

Scrutinizing Our Charity

It is well for us, as priests, to go over these fundamental principles from time to time, so as to test and try our own interior disposition and to determine for ourselves whether it is the love of God which is the dominant motive in our being, or the love of creatures, or the love of self—or rather to determine what relative share all these objects have in dominating our will, and, through our will, our life.

The priest has, by following his priestly vocation, pledged and committed himself to a life whose dominant motive is the love of God and of his neighbour for the sake of God. This is not a mere theoretical statement nor a purely idealistic remark; it is the most practical, the most concrete and matter-of-fact statement of the priest's vocation. He is pledged and consecrated to live a life of charity in imitation of that Man-God, Who gives the most sublime example of the love of God and of mankind. The priest, as the ambassador of Christ is, first and foremost, an envoy of Christ's charity. The love of God and of neighbour for the love of God is the distinguishing characteristic of Christ's character, His mission, His doctrine, and His Church. He Himself reiterated this again and again in most unmistakable terms. Addressing us by the endearing term of little children, He bade us love one another as He has loved us. He declared that by this all men should know that we are His disciples, that we have love one for another. He declared that, if any man love Him, His Father will love that man, and will come to him and will take up His abode in him. "A new commandment," said He, "I give unto you, that, . . . as I have loved you, . . . you also love one another." (John xiii. 34.) The whole course of Christ's life and death, and every incident and episode thereof, is eloquent of this teaching of charity. The Old Law was the law of fear; the New Law is the law of love.

Christ's Mystical Body

Christ's other self, the Church, manifests the same constant characteristic charity. In her judgment, it is heroic charity, in company with heroic faith and hope, that merits the canonization of the saints. The heroes of Christianity differ in every other respect—in condition, in education, in wealth, in dignity, in occupation, in state of life—but they are all alike in this, that heroic charity is the master motive of their actions. Despite the imperfections of mankind, Christ's mystical body, the Church, has been adorned in every age with those jewels of divine charity, the saints of God. St. Paul declares to us that "there remain faith, hope, and charity, . . . but the greatest of these is charity." (I Cor. xiii. 13.) How familiar these sayings are to us all, but here again what a great difference there is at times between knowing and realizing! To be a good representative of Christ—to be truly "another Christ," ministering in His name to His brethren—requires, above all and most of all, the true spirit of divine charity.

The Difference Between Feeling and Will

Even we priests have very often to recall to ourselves the difference between feeling and will. We cannot altogether control our feelings; we cannot always feel kindly when we would, nor avoid sometimes feeling great dislike and aversion for others. The movements of the feelings are physical impulses, but true love and charity does not abide in our bodily

part. It is the intention and inclination of the will that makes true love.

There have been many other priests like St. Francis de Sales, who frankly declared that he was by nature harsh and severe, but who became, through the constant exercise of inward charity of the will expressing itself in outward acts, the most gentle and most kind, the most tender and considerate of men. No doubt, in the beginning he very often had to do violence to his feelings in order to behave with gentleness and with kindness to all about him. But his will was kind, and so inward love gradually dominated and subdued his outward actions until every look, every word, and every gesture spoke of the inward love of his soul for God and man.

Charity of the Will

It is, therefore, the charity of the will at which we have to aim by constantly making acts of charity, acts of love for both God and man; and these inward acts of the will are able, little by little, to form a stronger habit of charity within us which will curb and even sweep away the rebellions of our feelings, harsh, unkind, or even cruel as these may naturally be. We are precisely like other men in this, that we are creatures of habit, and that habit is the child of acts. Every time we deliberately perform any act, that act leaves its indelible trace upon our character.

Whenever, therefore, we deliberately elicit an act of inward love of God or man, the habit of love is

strengthened in us; and, whenever we yield to any contrary action of the will, the natural habit of charity is weakened in us. The increase of charity by actions is true both of the natural and supernatural virtues; for let us never forget we have an infused and supernatural virtue of charity, which is also increased by every act of love. The supreme importance, therefore, of continually and deliberately insisting with ourselves on making acts of charity for God and our neighbour, and of expressing these inward acts by outward actions, ought to be realized even more by us than by the rest of men.

Two Great Hindrances to Charity

The two great obstacles within us to the divine charity which makes us love God for Himself and our neighbour for the sake of God, are inordinate self-love and excessive love of other creatures. We are obliged to love ourselves, and we are obliged to love other creatures, because the well-ordered love of God requires this. God has put us in this world to be social beings and to live a social life, and this necessarily involves loving others and loving God's creatures with a reasonable and well-ordered love.

We are obliged to love ourselves also with a well-ordered love, for, after God, we are the most important beings in the universe to ourselves. We have our own destiny to accomplish, our own work to do, our soul to save, our talents to develop. Therefore, the

love of self and the love of creatures are in themselves good, and are part of the duty we owe to God.

But a rightly ordered love of self and of creatures requires, as we all know, that that love be reasonable and well proportioned. The love of creatures for their own sake and the love of self for its own sake are in opposition to some of the duties we owe to God. As we have in common with all mankind an unhappy inclination to love creatures too much and to love self too much, we are obliged forever to struggle against those two inordinate inclinations. This struggle is a lifelong one. We shall never be completely victorious over ourselves, until the light of heaven discloses the beauty of God and we are lost in the contemplation of His lovableness.

The Effort Needed

But on earth we can bring ourselves nearer and nearer to this heavenly state of the love of God, if we will make the necessary effort of mind and will to do so. In heaven, it will be easy to love God, but unmeritorious. On earth, it is difficult to love God, but most meritorious. Our intelligence and our will both have a part in that struggle. Since, in this world, we are separated from God and cannot perceive Him directly, we have to labour with our intelligence to read the book of nature and mankind, the book of the Old Testament and the New, the teachings of Moses and the prophets and of Christ—so as to bring before our intelligence a moving and real idea of God's unending lovableness.

Of all men, we priests can read in that book with the greatest ease. The contemplation of God ought to be more easy to us than to all others for various reasons: because we are so well instructed in theology, which includes the science of the lovableness of God; because we, more than the rest of the faithful, have been taught to meditate and to pray; because we have lived in such intimate contact with God, and nourished ourselves continually by the Blessed Sacrament, while ministering each day in Christ's name at His holy altar. Shall we not add, that we of all men have most opportunities of seeing how human nature mirrors the lovableness of God?

To Whom Much Has Been Given

The fervent Catholic people to whom we minister are the noblest of humankind, and in their virtues and goodness they express in their simple way the lovableness of God. We are, therefore, in a most advantageous position to love God, and are surrounded by innumerable motives and aids for that love. What is needed in us is a constant, personal effort to realize these things, to act upon them, and to utilize the many means we have of growing constantly in the love of God.

It will be an added stimulus to us to take advantage to the utmost of our singular opportunities to remember the trenchant saying of Christ, that from those to whom much has been given, from them much shall be required. We are called, committed, and

obliged to a high degree of the love of God, because we have received so much aid toward acquiring that love.

After the effort of the intelligence to realize more and more God's lovableness, comes the constant effort of the will to elicit acts of the love of God. Every time we say within ourselves: "My God, I love You for Your own sake," we bring into action the supernatural virtue of charity and strengthen that virtue. The reaction of exercise upon strength is as sure and definite in the supernatural and moral order as it is in the physical order—more sure and definite indeed. Every time we exercise a muscle, that muscle becomes definitely stronger. Every time we exercise a virtue, that virtue becomes definitely greater.

In this way, by constant trying, are we to grow in the love of God—by repeated acts of the virtue of divine charity. The priest, therefore, ought to make it the dominant effort in his life often to make acts of the love of God, so as to love Him more and more. Divine love is the noblest of all motives, the most meritorious, the most suitable to human nature, the most worthy and glorious for the priest as for every child of God. "My God, I love You above all things, with my whole heart for Your own sake, because You are so worthy of all my love," is the simple formula of priestly sanctity. "Love God," says St. Augustine, "and do as you please, for, if you truly love Him, you will wish to do nothing that can displease Him."

The Same Motive

The charity we owe to our fellow men is not a different virtue from that which we owe to God. We love God for His own sake, and our neighbour for the love of God. The motive is the same, and indeed the act is the same; for we love God for the lovableness which we see in Him, and love our neighbour for the resemblance which our neighbour bears to God. Every human being is a living image of God. Everyone is a blood-brother or blood-sister of Jesus Christ. This is the motive of divine charity toward our neighbour. It is an absolutely universal motive, and applies to all human beings, because they are human beings.

To make discriminations, therefore, and love one and hate another, to cherish one and neglect another, is not divine charity. Consequently, when we favour one person unduly and wrongfully disregard another, when we show unreasonable preferences, we are not acting with the charity of Christ. Now, in order to achieve this universal charity for our neighbour, we have to go through the same process as when we strive to achieve the love of God.

There must be an effort of the intelligence to realize what we know so well, that every human being is the image of God, the blood-sister or blood-brother of the Most High. Then, to this intellectual realization we must add frequent supernatural acts of inward love of our neighbour—of kindness, patience, zeal motived by love—inward acts which express themselves in outward actions. These two together, the

effort of the intelligence and the effort of the will, will surely result in true charity for our neighbour.

Abandoning Opportunities

There is no one who has more opportunities of practicing charity, both toward God and man, than has the priest in the everyday exercise of his priestly ministry. His whole life ought to be an act of charity. He has given himself up, body and soul, to the service of Christ, and to the service of others for the sake of Christ. In becoming "another Christ," he has forgone the exercise of some of the dearest rights of humanity, has given up some of its dearest consolations. In return, he has received the sublime seal of the priestly character, the seal of service, of consecration to a life entirely motivated by charity. There is no other virtue which can so guarantee the Christlikeness of a man as a Christlike charity. Even faith and hope cannot match the efficacy of this pearl of the virtues. If a man has the charity of Christ, he is like Christ. If he lacks the charity of Christ, or has it only in scant measure, then he is in nowise, or only a little, like Christ.

Supplying Many Deficiencies

The possession of this virtue will in great measure make up and supply for many other deficiencies. Even learning, so necessary to a priest, is not so essential as charity. Bring before your mind the remembrance of the Curé d'Ars, and see him in his three

decades of patient service at the altar, in the pulpit, and in the confessional of his little country church. He was a man who had had the greatest difficulty in his priestly studies, who seemed to lack many of those qualifications which make a man a powerful shepherd of souls.

Yet, he was inflamed with charity. Through the poor lantern of his flesh, worn thin by watching and labours, there shone the heavenly light of divine charity for God and man. This sufficed for him. It even took the place of food and drink, and nerved him, even in his old age, to sixteen hours of vigil each day at the altar and in the confessional. This supplied in him the human knowledge which he lacked, the human appeal of science and training for which he had never had opportunity.

It was this light of charity, shining out in his devoted life, that first converted his little village, then extended its influence to the countryside, then drew the throngs of men and women of every degree of wealth and culture from all the ends of the world, who hastened to Ars to listen to the simple words of the poor Curé, to kneel in his confessional, to experience the balm of healing and consolation which his divine charity instilled into their souls. So there remain faith and hope and charity, but the greatest of these is charity; and for this indispensable and sufficing virtue we should pray incessantly, for ourselves and for brother priests.

V. THE PRIEST'S JUSTICE

IT is good for all of us from time to time to cast a glance on all the natural foundation stones of our character. Some people inconsistently endeavour to build up or to maintain a supernatural character that is worth while, without having the natural foundation stones for such an edifice. In studying the virtue of prudence we shall say something about its place in a priestly life. Let us think awhile about the place of justice in the priestly character.

Prudence has to do with the intelligence, and inclines us to act according to right reason. Justice is a moral habit which makes our will inclined to render to everyone what belongs to him. It has been called the most important of the cardinal virtues, for it makes us want to do our duty to God and man, and keeps us ready to discharge our obligations honestly, fully, and consistently.

Professional Obligations Binding in Justice

By assuming the priestly office a man gives many other people claims upon him. This is true of all professions, for every professional worker holds himself out to the general public as a willing helper. By the very fact of adopting his profession the lawyer contracts to be skilled and ready to defend man's rights, the physician undertakes to be competent to heal men's bodies. But the priest offers to all comers a yet more important and necessary service—the cure of souls.

There is in the priest something of all the other learned professions. He is a man of law, having to administer the momentous laws of conscience and the positive laws of the Church, on the right administration of which the salvation of souls so greatly depends. He is a physician of souls, and he must know the diseases of man's spirit and the ways of curing them. He is a judge, who has to sit in the tribunal of penance and to bind and loose according to the natural law and the law of the Church.

Tremendous Powers

To discharge his difficult office, he is invested with tremendous powers. As "another Christ," he exercises a sway over souls from which there is sometimes no appeal. Every professional man has the public at his mercy, because in crises men often cannot pick and choose—for example, they must frequently have recourse to the first doctor who presents himself, or the first nurse who can be summoned. Besides, men have often no means of discriminating between or judging the relative skill of professional workers. The fact that a man or woman has a diploma and exercises the calling of a doctor or a nurse, wins the public confidence for better or for worse. The public must trust themselves to the hands of those who are supposed to have knowledge and skill for all ordinary contingencies. Hence, every professional worker is obliged in justice to possess such a minimum of know ledge and skill.

The Necessary Trust of the People

But what is true of these professional workers is far more strictly true of the priest. A man enters the confessional, and he has often no means whatsoever of determining whether the priest who sits in the tribunal is of this or that personal character—this or that excellence of training. He trusts himself to the priest as to the vicegerent of God, making no distinction of persons. Therefore, every priest is surely bound in justice to have the minimum of virtue, knowledge, and prudence, which is required in order fairly and honestly to exercise the priestly office toward all comers. Now, the virtue of justice inclines the priest to give all men their due.

Impartial Ministry

In his priestly office the just priest will be perfectly impartial, no respecter of persons, heedless of his own preferences and aversions, his likes and dislikes, treating all men, so far as possible, as Christ would have treated them, because in fact his efforts are the actions of Christ. "He who does a thing by another," the old maxim runs, "does it by himself." What Christ does through the priest acting in his priestly office, is done, not alone by the priest, but also by Christ. A keen sense of justice, and the habitual care to act as justice requires, will make the priest a model of fidelity and self-sacrifice. He was not obliged, let us recall again, to undertake the priestly office. No man is ordained under compul-

sion, but of his own free will. But, having assumed that office, he is strictly bound to live up to its requirements. It is useful for us to review these well-known principles and to apply them to our own life and experience, to our relations with others, so as to examine just how far we merit the title "just."

Two Reasons for the Priest's Need of Justice

Every priest has a great need of a keen sense of justice for two reasons. First, because the interests with which he deals are interests of eternity and therefore of supreme importance; second, because those who depend upon him have very often no means of enforcing their right except by appealing to the justice of the priest himself. It seldom happens that anyone who considers that he is wronged or neglected by the priest in the discharge of his priestly office, thinks of seeking any redress elsewhere, or making any appeal.

Hence, the priest himself needs a very keen and constant awareness of his own duties and of others' rights, for it is a terrible thing to injure others when they have no means of redress. Of course, most priests have a keen sense of justice, and this helps to keep them faithful to their difficult and often wearisome duties. They are aware of their obligations, both to God and to man, which flow from the sacred fact of their priesthood. It is a solemn thought to reflect that we are bound not only to man but to God, and in strict justice, to be worthy ambassadors of Christ.

Christ's Intrusted Interests

Since, in undertaking to serve as Christ's ambassador to man, we take on ourselves His person, what we do is imputed by men to Him. This gentle Lord, Who has done so much for the salvation of mankind, Who has become man, like unto us in everything except sin, Who lived in suffering and sorrow, in contempt and dereliction, in envy and contumely—this gentle Lord has now intrusted His interests and good repute into our hands, and His people, bought with His precious Blood, into our care. He forgives their sins through our ministry; He feeds them with His Sacred Body and Blood only by our hands.

We can offer up in His name to His heavenly Father that sacrifice of His Body and Blood which He offered up in person on the Cross, but which even He will now no longer offer up except through the ministry of priests. He has bid us feed His lambs. We are bound to Him by strict justice not to be unworthy of such a trust, so freely accepted. As other Christs, justice demands of us to be true to Christ in every necessary ministry which He has handed over to us, and to shepherd His flock as He has a right to expect that we shall shepherd it.

Some Virtues That Belong to Justice

Among the virtues which pertain to justice are loyalty, trustworthiness, and fidelity to one's promises. Truthfulness also is an element of justice, while other elements are gratitude, firmness and strength

in repelling evil, love, and charity for others, liberality, friendliness, and the habit of obeying the law. Everyone will profit by going over these virtues from time to time, and examining honestly how far they are resplendent in his own life. Frankness and truthfulness are qualities that win general respect and conciliate good will.

Fidelity to duty and faithfulness to one's promises are likewise splendid virtues. The character of a just man wins praise even from his enemies, and a priest who stands out and is distinguished for loyalty and faithfulness, does great service to the Church. These virtues all admit of degrees, and may be practiced with greater and less perfection. A shining excellence of fidelity and trustworthiness is not easy to achieve, especially for one whose duties and responsibilities are so great as are those of the priest.

The Beauty of a Priest's Self-Devotion

But what spectacle is more beautiful in the eyes of men and angels than a man who is utterly self-devoting in his priestly duties—who has forgotten himself in his zeal for the service of God in his fellow men? Such a one lives for duty; he is always at the call of all those in need or distress; he tastes the sweetest satisfaction which life can offer, the consciousness that he has entirely abandoned self and selfish interests to dedicate himself without stint to the noblest work on earth—the salvation of souls. Surely, therefore, we all have every incentive to aspire

after and labour for that element of justice which consists in unwavering faithfulness to duty and constancy in fulfilling our obligations.

Gratitude a Part of Justice

Gratitude is also a part of justice, and the heart of the priest has many occasions for practicing this virtue. Though he has given himself entirely to the service of his people for the love of Christ, how many occasions he has to be grateful and appreciative toward those same people who love him so loyally and support him so faithfully! Gratitude is akin to mercy, in that it blesses him that gives and him that receives. To be grateful and appreciative of others makes the world seem brighter and human nature more lovable. The priest who has a grateful heart will live in a perpetual sunshine of appreciated favours.

Those who have little gratitude, see the world as a gloomy place, in which their talents are little valued, their services little appreciated. In the same circumstances, the ungrateful man will live with a distressful sense of being unappreciated while the grateful man will bask in the sunshine of many kind deeds coming from his flock. More than other men, the priest has need of this just sense of gratitude, because he needs to see the good in those about him and to be cheered up by the sense of their kindliness and appreciation.

Firmness and Kindness

Firmness of character and strength in repelling

evil are likewise elements of justice, and the character of the priest should be eminent for these virtues also. Firmness tempered with kindliness and strength guided by prudence are constantly needed in the work of the parish, so that wrong may not go unrebuked and evil unchastized, but so that at the same time hearts may not be unwisely bruised or souls turned away from God by ill-advised severity. Most men lean to one or the other of two extremes: either they are so gentle of disposition and kindly of character that they shrink from rebuking and resisting evil, even when evil should be rebuked, or else they are so inclined to harshness and severity that they go too far in reprimanding others, and fail to temper their zeal with prudence and charity. There is no harm in natural inclinations, if we know how to govern them.

Here, as everywhere else, real virtue is in the middle course, and the priest who knows himself to be too severe will always lean toward kindness and gentleness, while he who judges himself to be too easy and gentle will nerve himself to rebuke evil. Generally speaking, however, persuasive methods of correction are far better than harshness. St. Francis de Sales, that model of priestly zeal and priestly charity, who used to say, as we all remember, that a drop of honey will catch more flies than a barrelful of vinegar; once confided to a friend that through forty years he had had to labour to be gentle and kind. "I should fear," he declared, "to allow myself to be harsh even once, lest the little drop of human kindness which

I have been these long years storing in my heart, should be lost by once yielding to severity."

The Duty of Loving Others

To put love and kindliness to others under the head of justice, may seem at first a strange classification, but to be loving and kind is a duty and a necessary part of our obligation to others. Our Lord has said: "A new commandment I give unto you: that you love one another." It is not, therefore, an exercise of generosity on our part to be loving and kind, but it is observing with justice a commandment of our Lord.

This is particularly true of one who bears the character of Christ and who is Christ's ambassador. Christ is the very perfect model of all love and kindness, and He has shown us by His own example what we should be to all men. Again, surely the priest owes an impartial love to all. If he is kind toward some and harsh toward others, friendly toward some and cold toward others, he violates the law of justice. St. Paul's Christlike ambition to be all things to all men, ought to be the standard for the priest.

The priest owes it to himself and to others, and to Christ as well, to be a friendly man. Priests are fishers of men, and everyone knows what patient arts the fisherman uses to capture his elusive game. Now, friendliness is the net or the bait which wins hearts and conciliates souls. It was the friendliness and gentleness of St. Francis de Sales that enabled him

to turn aside the violent bigotry of the heretics and to make many converts to the Faith. More than his arguments, and more than his many leaflets and pamphlets, was the charm of his constant friendliness. The priest should be an apostle to all men with whom he comes in contact. Therefore, the virtue of friendliness is part of his duty to all men.

The Habit of Obeying All the Laws

Finally, the habit of obeying the law is part of the virtue of justice, and here again priests may make very practical reflections on their duty to give a good example to others by being law-abiding, by standing up for the law, by showing reverence for the authority of government. The secular authorities have their powers from the same God Who has given the priest his priestly faculties. All well-ordered authority comes from God, and St. Paul commands us to obey secular officials, within the scope of their office, as though Christ Himself commanded through their lips.

It is a dangerous thing to begin to pick and choose as to what laws we shall break, and what we shall observe. Sometimes the priest, by virtue of his standing in the community, can dispense himself from some observances, but he will do well to refrain from this luxury of lawbreaking. The simple people cannot make delicate discriminations, and to see the priest violating laws and regulations gives them just so much less respect for the law. The way to cure an unjust law is to work openly and lawfully for its repeal, and to propose something better in its stead.

Discrimination Dangerous

As regards the conscientious obligation of observing the law, we all know the distinction between the penal law and the law which binds in conscience; and yet it is not so easy or safe to apply this distinction in practice. The priest who observes all the laws with conscientious care, has the consolation of knowing that he stands on the side of right and justice, and gives a good example to his people. If he continues to choose what laws to observe and what to disregard, he may find the weaker or less educated in his congregation imitating him in choosing, but not so discreetly.

To sum up then, this virtue of justice, in all its applications, is one concerning which the priest will do extremely well often to examine himself. The highest praise is given in Holy Scripture to the just man who fulfills all his obligations to God and to his fellow men. Christ, our Master and Model, is the Sun of Justice, and His Blessed Mother has received the glorious title of "Mirror of Justice," because she so perfectly reflects the justice of her Divine Son. The term "justice" is here used in a wider sense, of course, than the limits of the moral virtue. Yet, no one can be just in that wider sense without practicing the moral virtue of justice, and the constant and habitual inclination to give to God and to all men their due, is certainly a foundation stone of the ideal priestly character.

VI. THE PRIEST'S PRUDENCE

WE have all of us often heard that grace builds upon nature, and that a good supernatural character presupposes a good natural character. We often quite fail to realize the significance of this statement, both in developing our own character and in influencing that of others. It is necessary to possess the fundamentals of a strong natural rectitude in order to build upon a good foundation the superstructure of a holy life. Now, the four corner stones of natural character are the four cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude. It is essential, therefore, for all men to possess these virtues, but the priest especially has the duty of cultivating them, both for his own sake and for the sake of those to whom he has to minister.

The Priest's Need of Prudence

We are told that the Latin word *prudentia* is but a contracted form of *providentia,* so that the essence of this virtue is the power to see ahead. The habit of prudence inclines us to discriminate rightly between good and evil, and to judge as to the better means of attaining our good ends. Prudence involves the possession of common sense, that misnamed quality which sometimes appears to be the most uncommon of human attributes. Of course, we know, too, that prudence is a virtue of the mind, of the intelligence. It has to do with judging correctly in

the concrete circumstances as to the better course of acting, the right means to be employed, and the right ends to be chosen. There is little need, therefore, of pointing out how important such a virtue is to a priest, who is put into so many circumstances where prudent judgment is absolutely necessary, both for his own good and for that of others.

There are some who are endowed by nature with common sense, and who have almost an instinct for recognizing the right ways of acting and for keeping the "golden mean" in all their various activities. Other persons are notably lacking in the quality of prudence. They may be geniuses in other regards, and may have specially excellent mental equipment; but they lack the quality of common sense, and their lives are sometimes wrecked by that fatal deficiency.

A Favourable Soil for Prudence

When a man is admitted to priestly studies, one of the qualifications usually required of him is the possession of a fair amount of common sense, and if at any time he is found to be notably lacking in that quality, he is dismissed. Besides, the very nature of the training for the priesthood tends—and of set design—to develop the quality of prudence. The systematic instructions in moral theology and pastoral theology, the careful supervision, the regular routine, the public opinion which watches over and influences members of the clergy—all these things tend to promote the cultivation of common sense.

As in the case of all other virtues, prayer, study, and practice, can greatly improve and perfect the quality of prudence. "Ask, and you shall receive" applies to this as to all other needful qualities, and one would think that the heart of Christ, solicitous for the good name of His Church and for the salvation of souls, would hear with special readiness the prayers offered up by the priest for the increase of his prudence and common sense.

Study, Observation, and the Comments of Others

Study and observation of oneself and others is also unquestionably an efficacious means of increasing priestly prudence. We can more readily see another's foibles and mistakes than our own. We should, to be sure, always look at others in a kindly spirit and refrain from judging them; but this does not prevent us from noticing where their exterior acts seem to depart from the requirements of prudence, so as to avoid the pitfalls and difficulties into which their course of conduct leads them. The priest also receives many and excellent indications from others of any lack, on his part, of prudence or common sense.

Sometimes the half-jesting comments of his fellow clergy will give a more trustworthy intimation of his departure from common sense than studied criticisms could do. By the way, the most frank and genuine criticisms we receive are often given in a moment of irritation or vexation by someone who would perhaps not be so frank with us in calmer moments, but who, being vexed, blurts out the truth just as he sees it.

The Need for Discrimination

It requires prudence, however, to discriminate between criticism which is the result of common sense on the part of others, and criticism which comes from jealousy or wrong judgment. It is, unfortunately, true that most human beings are inclined to misjudge others and be jealous of them. Hence, sometimes criticism or unfavourable comments proceed from this cause. The prudent way for us all is, therefore, to give these comments and criticisms careful consideration; if we find that they have a basis in fact and are well intended, we shall do well to use them, but, if they come from some personal twist on the part of the critic, they will only confirm us in our right course.

The benefit of criticisms from other people—especially of involuntary criticisms that they offer in moments of aggravation—is that they are likely to give us a new angle and show us ourselves from a new viewpoint. We grow so accustomed to ourselves that we sometimes lose sight almost entirely of very important characteristics in our own conduct. As it is a part of prudence to profit by the criticisms of others and their reactions to our conduct, it also requires humbleness of heart to profit by these things.

The Dependence of the Faithful

Most priests enjoy a great deal of independence, and are supreme, so to say, in their own sphere. They have a spiritual sway and rule, which is all the

more important and momentous because it is spiritual. If they make mistakes in judgment, they are likely to hurt the interests of the souls of those given to their care.

Besides, we have always to remember that the Catholic faithful are very often not free to choose to what priest they will go for counsel and guidance. They have to seek the ministrations of the priest whom they find in care of the parish. Indeed, many of them would not know how to go about choosing or judging as to the best one from whom to seek guidance. Hence, all priests constantly owe it to the Church and to the faithful to be as prudent as possible, and a high average standard of prudence is an absolute necessity for priests.

Special Lights and Graces

There is no doubt that, in the confessional (and out of it, when he has to give advice to the faithful in his priestly character), the priest receives special lights and graces. Every priest who has experience in this matter will readily declare that he is often able to give better counsel to others than he would have been able to formulate by his own natural prudence. The Holy Spirit helps the priest. Yet, while this is quite true, it is also true that the priest who presumes on this help of the Holy Spirit, and does not make the effort himself to cultivate prudence and to observe its dictates, does a distinct wrong and is guilty of presumption. After we have prayed for

prudence and worked to acquire it, then we can rely implicitly on the help of the Holy Ghost, but not otherwise.

St. Jerome, in his *Ep. LII ad Nepotianum,* 5, addresses solemn warnings to the priest on the subject of his dealings with women. He bids him treat them all equally, reserved with all, and loving them all alike with supernatural charity, and reminds him that he ought not to think himself any holier than David nor any wiser than Solomon, both of whom were undone by women. Finally, he advises him to be pure even of all suspicion, and to avoid beforehand what may be the cause of suspicion.

What Should We Advise Another?

The Golden Rule bids us do to others as we would like them to do to us. By turning this saying the other way, the priest may be able to advise himself prudently or to discriminate between the good and bad advice given him, by reflecting what he would counsel another to do under the same circumstances. The reason why we are sometimes inclined to act unwisely is that a seeming self-interest is likely to blind us to objective truth and to the dictates of prudence.

By asking ourselves what we should advise another person to do, who was in precisely the same circumstances as we, but in whom we had no personal interest whatever, we can sometimes avoid the inclination, this way or that, which self-interest gives,

and can thus arrive at the objective dictates of prudence. It requires a strong effort of our faculties to imagine another individual exactly in our circumstances, and then to ask ourselves what we should advise him to do. But this will help us to put personal preferences out of the question and decide according to the common-sense dictates of objective prudence.

The Danger of Discouragement

The priest also needs a high degree of prudence to discriminate between helpful and sound criticism and criticism which is merely destructive. Sound criticism is a great help; wrongful criticism may be a great obstacle. There are not a few persons who fail to discriminate between the one and the other. They allow themselves to be discouraged by criticism which they ought to disregard, and they fail to profit by criticism which is objective, sound, and helpful. Who can give rules to act as a guide in such cases? Prudence has to be exercised in the individual instance, and nothing will take the place of a right judgment in weighing and estimating criticism.

The Wisdom of Christ

Again, the prudence of the priest has to be, not merely shrewdness of the world, but a prudence full of the wisdom of Christ. By his very calling, the priest has forsworn the prudence of the world. It is worldly prudence to provide for oneself first and foremost, to seek the comforts and conveniences of life,

its honours and rewards, and, while keeping within the bounds of respectability and duty, to live more for this world than for the next and to devote more energy to the earning and keeping of this world's goods than to the securing of a heavenly crown.

This worldly wisdom, the vocation of the priest confutes and puts to shame. He who is to be "another Christ," must love the Cross. When we read the Epistles of St. Paul, we are constantly struck with the solid prudence and striking wisdom of his character. Yet, his wisdom is the wisdom of the Crucified, and his prudence the prudence of a man who gives all things in this world in order to win life eternal. His prudence is the more strong, solid, and genuine, because it is based on the folly of the Cross. So, the prudence of the priest must be transformed and permeated with the spirit of Christ. If it is a worldly prudence, it becomes, in the priest, not prudence, but folly.

The Examen of Conscience an Aid to Prudence

Like every other virtue, prudence is remarkably cultivated by exercise. One of the excellent results of the practice known as examination of conscience, by which a man day by day brings his actions before the tribunal of his own judgment, is that this practice cultivates the habit of prudence. If faithfully, day by day, we submit our actions to the scrutiny of our calm, impartial reason, and examine wherein we have pleased God and wherein offended Him, we cannot

fail to notice many mistakes of judgment, imprudences, or defects which come from a lack of this excellent virtue.

Then, by trying day by day to correct these imprudences, to bring our thoughts, words, and actions more and more in line with Christ's ideal for us, we grow continually in prudence, as in other virtues. So, day by day, whether he likes it or not, a man builds up or tears down his own character. There is no such thing as standing still in the life of the spirit. Either we are going forward constantly, in prudence as in other virtues, or else we are falling back. Life itself is a great school of prudence, and it is a sad thing when a man fails to learn the lessons of that school.

Prudent Preparedness

A moving and compelling reason why the priest, above all men, should practice the virtue of prudence, is that so many must come to him for counsel. In the confessional and out of it, he must forever be giving advice, answering questions, helping to mould character, guiding human destinies; and for all this, prudence of a high order, a safe and trained prudence, is required.

When we have made a careful preparation for a sermon, we often observe that we may not perhaps say precisely what we had intended, but what we do say will be much better, because of the previous thought and attention given to the subject. So, when we have long tried to practice prudence and have

prayed for that necessary virtue fervently, we may surprise ourselves by the advice we actually give, which seems wiser and better than that of which we were capable. The help of the Holy Spirit is given precisely because of the careful preparation, the effort, and the prayer which went before.

"God and I," said St. Teresa of Avila, "can do whatever God Himself can do." And this is certainly true of the priest, who is clothed with the dignity of the ambassador of the Infinite. Yet, it is necessary to have God with us in order that we may do whatever God can do, and it is through effort and prayer—prayer for prudence and the practice of prudence—that we are enabled to gain God's help in counseling others.

VII. THE PRIEST'S FORTITUDE

THE manly character counts fortitude as one of its most distinctive virtues, and Christ, the perfect model of true manliness, gives us an example of this virtue which is perfect and most sublime. Modern painters and sculptors have only too often missed the proper delineation of this virtue in the countenance of the Saviour. In emphasizing His humility and meekness of expression, they have left out that indomitable courage, that endless power of endurance, that consummate fortitude which characterize every action of our Saviour. By His example He showed all His followers, and especially His priests, how to endure even the most terrible insults, to persevere against the most violent persecutions, to labour on, in spite of unspeakable weariness. He calmly endured a passion unequaled in all other records of human suffering, and which culminated in the agonizing death of the Cross.

Christ the Model of Priestly Fortitude

Thus, Jesus Christ, the Model of the priesthood, gives us a perfect example of fortitude, as of prudence, justice, and temperance. In us, as in Him, fortitude becomes not only a natural virtue, but a supernatural one, and a gift of the Holy Ghost. But grace builds on nature, and the greatest heroes of old, beholding in Christ the bravest of men, would have acknowledged Him as possessed of far greater fortitude than

they, even from the natural viewpoint. Thus, no man can be a true follower of Christ without possessing, to an eminent degree, the virtue of fortitude.

More than other men, the priest has need in a high degree of this great virtue, because the very nature of the calling which he has freely undertaken requires great powers of endurance, the strength to bear up against weariness and discouragement, the patience to sustain vexation and the faults of others, the magnanimity to rise above himself and steadfastly to struggle for perfection; in a word, exceptional fortitude.

The Backbone of Character

This virtue may be said to be the backbone of all the other virtues. It gives a man the courage, endurance, and persistence to keep up that incessant battle with self and with outside tendencies and difficulties which must needs be sustained in order that one may lead a virtuous life. Perhaps more courage is required and more fortitude exercised in remaining faithful for year after year in the grind of everyday parish work, than would be exercised by the chaplain of an army, who was required to expose himself now and then to grave danger. There is an excitement and exaltation in a sudden crisis, where the eyes of many are fixed upon us, that stir up all the manliness we possess, and make it easy for us to do stirring deeds. But fidelity to the routine of every day requires the exercise of pure fortitude, unaided by the stimulant of excitement or of the public gaze.

More in Endurance Than in Courage

St. Thomas intimates that fortitude lies more in the power of endurance, more in resisting fear and bearing dangers and suffering, than in active courage and warlike bravery. The power to suffer calmly, to act against difficulties, to resist temptation, to sustain a course of virtuous action against the contrary pull of the world, the flesh, and the devil—this is of the essence of fortitude. It is, therefore, a virtue most necessary to everyone—not to warriors alone, but those also who carry on the lifelong conflict against unseen enemies of the powers of darkness. In the vanguard of these courageous combatants, the priest, by the very nature of his office, must stand.

It is a very useful part of that self-examination which becomes from time to time the duty of every priest, to ask himself with great frankness how far the genuine virtue of fortitude shines out in his priestly life. Are there any incipient breaks or yieldings in the strong stuff of constancy, earnestness, courage, perseverance, and fidelity that must make up the character of a priest? If so, the thought that yielding is unmanly, that fortitude is *par excellence* the manly virtue, and that we must be strong of heart to be Christlike, will be a great help toward renewing a spirit of genuine fortitude.

Consider Your Conscience

We should also examine ourselves concerning the virtue of patience, which is an essential part of forti-

tude. This is a nervous age, and all too many priests are overworked and overwrought by reason of the too great stress under which they have to live. The ordinary work of the parish, especially in large parishes, is a strain on the nerves. No wonder that a man often feels like "flying off the handle," like giving people "a piece of his mind," and yielding to the inward irritation which he feels so that others clearly perceive that he has lost his temper. It is the manly thing to exercise patience all the more as the provocation grows greater, and to match one's powers of calm endurance against any vexation that others can bring.

"Patience is what makes us dear to God and keeps us so; it tempers anger, controls the tongue, governs the mind, keeps peace, maintains discipline, breaks the onslaughts of lust, holds back the violence of pride, puts out the fires of contention, limits the power of the rich, relieves the misery of the poor, preserves for virgins their blessed purity, for widows their careful chastity, maintains love between the wedded and those who are closely united." St. Cyprian, *De Bono Patientiae,* 20. The Saint here speaks not of patience in a narrow sense, but of that brave spirit of courage which is ready to endure whatever is hard to nature in the practice of virtue and the doing of good deeds.

Here again we have the consolation of Christ's example, as we see Him pressed about by the unreasonable multitude, having from time to time to go apart into the desert and rest awhile in prayer, when

He is worn out by the importunities of the people. It was doubtless for the consolation of His priests that Christ left in the Gospel a record of His trials and weariness. For them also He left the chronicle of His chosen manner for refreshing His spiritual strength and inward fortitude by seasons of solitude and prayer.

The Power of Perseverance

Constancy and perseverance are likewise an essential part of the virtue of fortitude. Who can doubt the large part they have to play in the success of the priest's mission? Every young priest who is worthy of his vocation enters upon his priestly career with high ambitions, with noble aspirations. He has left behind him all worldly careers, and has given himself to the service of Christ, with the great ambition to become Christlike. He wishes to be—not just any sort of priest—but a distinguished warrior, a hero in the service of his Master.

The one great virtue which he needs to fulfill his ambitions—assuming, of course, the essential virtues, such as faith, hope, and charity—is the virtue of perseverance. Without perseverance he will accomplish nothing worth while. With perseverance, he can struggle forward indefinitely far, or rather as far as life and opportunity will take him. To keep everlastingly trying in spite of discouragements from within and without, in spite of trials and disappointments, against the opposition which comes from whatever quarter, is the sure formula for noble success.

Better Than Talent

It is better to have perseverance than to have great talent. We have all seen or known of men who possessed great talents without perseverance, and we know how fruitless their talents have been, because they would not hold out against discouragement and opposition. They could not stand criticism, nor pursue an objective unfalteringly in spite of envy and adversity. But the man of very moderate talents, who resembles other men in everything except his indomitable fortitude and perseverance, will drive on through pain, discouragement, failure, opposition, criticism, neglect, envy, even weariness and illness, until he has achieved his purpose.

"Sir, I consider you a great man," remarked someone to Roosevelt toward the end of his career. "If, by a great man," replied Roosevelt, "you mean a man who has genius to do what other men could not do, I am not a great man in that sense. But, if you mean by a great man a man who will do things which other men could do but will not, then perhaps in that sense I have been great." The difference between the man who will do what he can and the man who will not, is very often only the difference between perseverance and weak surrender to difficulties.

The Formula for Persevering

The simple formula for perseverance is that of the sage of old: *Sustine, abstine, age.* The priest who can bear what has to be borne in order to succeed in

his priestly aspirations, who can be content to "scorn delights and live laborious days"—that priest will realize, in a very great measure, his youthful aspirations. He will utilize to as great a degree as a human heart should desire, the talents God has given him. There is no other way under heaven to success and achievement but the rocky way of perseverance, along which men must go forward unwaveringly, treading the bloodstained stones of that Way of the Cross, until they come, through suffering, to success.

The power to stand up against criticism is very essential for this perseverance, and is an important part of the virtue of fortitude. Anyone who has ideals, who has definite aspirations, will inevitably have to bear a certain amount, and sometimes a great amount, of misinterpretation, envy, and criticism. He will hear remarks, or have them repeated to him, which cut to the quick; he will be sensible of opposition where he expected encouragement, of misunderstanding where he looked for sympathy and comprehension.

Cruel Misinterpretations

Even good people—even priests—are sometimes very cruel to one another. Most painful of all perhaps, when he is sincere and earnest, he will become aware that his motives are misinterpreted, that he is accused of what men shrink from having imputed to them—of selfishness, of self-advertising, of seeking notoriety. This is one of the trials a priest finds it hardest to sustain and disregard. It is such a precious

thing to serve Christ, to imitate Christ, to follow in His footsteps, that everyone who walks after Him must pay the price that He paid of bearing biting criticism and cruel misinterpretation. The servant is not greater than his Master, Who was crucified by calumny. Many promising careers have been discouraged, many great aspirations dampened, because of the lack of enough fortitude to bear criticism!

The Endurance of Monotony

There is also a weariness and monotony in steady effort which require fortitude to withstand, and here again the motto of the priest must be: *Sustine!* Youth is full of energy. It has all the physical requirements for fortitude; that is to say, vitality, high spirits, the capacity to throw off weariness. But middle age loses some of this physical resiliency. Paul Bourget in his novel, *Le Demon du Midi,* has sustained the thesis that there is another "dangerous age" which comes at about the midday of life. The prayer of the Psalm, to be delivered *"a dæmonio meridiano"* points, he thinks, to this dangerous middle age. Then, fortitude is likely to fail somewhat, resistance may weaken, and men are in danger of those "collapses in adult life," which come largely from a want of patient resistance, of constancy, and perseverance in well-doing.

The Strength to Carry On

The ability and moral courage to carry on in the face of apparent failure is also a mighty element of

the virtue of fortitude. Success is encouraging, heartening, cheerful, cordial, a tonic to the spirits; but to fail again and again in spite of earnest efforts, to see but small results from great labours, and yet to keep on working though discouraged, requires true manliness of soul. Women in this regard are sometimes braver than men, more patient, more tolerant of small results.

How many parish societies, after a promising beginning and after all the preliminaries of organization have been carried through, have failed miserably and come to nothing because of a lack of perseverance! Where was the fault? Or, to put it more urbanely, who might have insured success by a greater degree of perseverance? Is it not true in many cases that the priest, who perhaps first proposed the plan, grew discouraged and weary at failure after failure, and gave up just at the moment, it may be, when he was on the point of succeeding.

A Case in Point

Once, when a number of priests had met together to discuss the organization of parish sodalities, one old pastor spoke up to discourage the plan. "It is no use," he said, "to try to organize such societies these days. I made three separate starts with a young ladies' sodality and each time it fell to pieces."

"Well, my dear Father," said another priest who had come to the meeting, "you wouldn't expect to

start a really good sodality with only three trials, would you?"

The question was asked in a half-jesting tone, but one of the other priests spoke up in answer.

"It is quite true," he said, "that three times are not enough. I also started three times and failed, but, the fourth time I tried, the sodality was quite successful, and it is keeping up today. It was only at the fourth trial that we really got it going."

The Fortitude of Self-Denial

The ability to abstain from what is pleasant, to refrain from self-indulgence, "to scorn delights" when duty calls, is also an important part of the virtue of fortitude. This is the most luxurious, convenient, comfortable, and pleasure-loving of centuries, and our nation is so well supplied with all material good things that a priest needs a high degree of fortitude to keep from yielding somewhat to the temper of the times. Yet, once a priest becomes pleasure-loving, easy-going, and self-indulgent, he is lost to the glorious ranks of the warriors of the Crucified. But to live in the midst of plenty and yet be self-denying, is really a more glorious achievement than to practice frugality when one is forced to do so. So, the priest of today who has the fortitude to live a frugal, devoted life, deserves more credit than even those courageous missionaries who bore the brunt of pioneer hardships. The people observe acutely the priest's self-denial, and reverence him for it.

The Courage to Work On

The finest fortitude, however, on the part of the priest, is the ability not only to sustain difficulties, opposition, criticism, failure, but to continue to work on in spite of them and with all the more energy and determination. Mere passive endurance is not so much a virtue as a necessity. Whether we like it or not, we have to go on, while we live, enduring each day's trials and discouragements. But to be able to throw off the deadening incubus of discouragement, and to work and pray undismayed through all difficulties, this is the fine flower of fortitude. A man's real mettle is shown in the cheerful persistence with which he struggles on with a singing heart in the face of difficulties and opposition, increases his efforts in direct proportion to the growth of obstacles and wins a victory the more glorious because the battle was hard.

Supernatural Fortitude

Much of what we have been saying applies as well to the natural virtue of fortitude as to the supernatural. Yet, in the priest, it is the supernatural which is excellent and desirable. The poet Henley, in the hospital, suffering, yet undefeated by pain, sings: "Beneath the bludgeoning of fate, my head is bloody, but unbowed." He is uttering a note of natural fortitude. So, too, is Tennyson when he thus apostrophizes fortune:

> Smile, and we smile, the lords of many lands!
> Frown, and we smile, the lords of our own hands,
> For man is man, and master of his fate!

Such sayings stir the soul and warm the blood, and, when we build upon this impulse of natural courage, a supernatural fortitude whose motive is the love of Christ and whose inspiration is the grace of God, then we have a strong supernatural character that is able to withstand the stresses and discouragements of life.

The Power of Realization

The more vivid becomes our realization of the example which Christ has given us of heroic and unfaltering fortitude, the more easy it will be for us, His priests, to bear with a manly heart all that life holds of pain or weariness, criticism or opposition—troubles without or within us—in the discharge of our priestly duties. No one of His priests has ever had so difficult, trying, and fearful a task as He Who came to suffer and to die that all men might be saved.

He willed to give us an example of matchless fortitude, and therefore He bore many sufferings, underwent many trials and much opposition, which were not necessary, indeed, for our salvation, but which He wished to undergo for our encouragement and consolation. The memory of Christ should be with us always, an habitual recollection of His example.

As the priest sits in his confessional, practicing patience and long-suffering, he may well see in his mind's eye Christ, sitting in the midst of the multitude, spent and weary, pressed about by the crowds, yet speaking to them with heavenly patience and

sweetness. As the priest goes about the parish, visiting the sick, seeking out the unfortunate, in quest of sinners, he may well fix the eyes of his heart on Christ, walking about through the dusty ways of Judea, patiently seeking souls as he also is seeking souls for Christ.

The Form on the Cross

When harsh criticism and bitter misunderstanding, or even calumny and persecution, lacerate the heart of the priest, let him contemplate the Heart of Christ, the most bitterly calumniated of all men, most harshly criticized, hounded to death by His enemies whom He had come to save. When inward discouragement, dryness, and dereliction agonize the heart of the priest, he will look on the Crucifix, holiest and most common of emblems, where the silent Figure on the Cross gives to us the supreme example of fortitude, the most perfect type of priestly courage and patience, as He then offered up in a bloody manner on the Cross the sacrifice which He now offers up daily by our hands in the Mass.

With such a Leader and such an example, the priests of Christ should be the manliest and the most courageous of all the sons of men. Indeed, who can fail to see that quiet, patient fortitude shines out in the character of every worthy priest? It is the gift of Christ to those who most dearly love and most closely follow Him.

VIII. THE PRIEST'S TEMPERANCE

THE marvelous achievements in long-distance aviation which are an occasion of exultation and admiration today, are the fruit of an immense capacity for taking pains. Instead of the rudimentary motors which painfully lifted from earth the clumsily made flying machines of some years ago and kept them in the air for a few precarious moments, we now see motors capable of standing the terrific strain of a trans-Atlantic voyage. This perfection is the result of great effort and labour for their gradual perfecting.

But, when a present-day aviator makes immediate preparation for a trans-Atlantic flight, then it is that we see care and scrutiny raised to the highest power. This man knows that upon the strength and perfection of every part of his machine his own life and the lives of others who are to accompany him will surely depend. He is to mount into the air, and maintain himself in that rare medium, far above the ordinary habitat of man, for many perilous hours. Therefore, he goes over his machine again and again. He tunes up the motor until it runs to perfection. He may even use the X-ray to make sure that every bit of metal is sound and true. For such a superhuman exploit no vigilance or preparedness seems too great.

An Analogy of Preparedness

How close is the analogy between the preparedness required of the trans-Atlantic aviator and that

of the priest, who is also destined for a flight above the natural powers of man. The one in the physical order, but the other in the moral order, is to soar into rarefied airs, and sustain himself against the downward pull of nature. Therefore, every element of success must be attended to, and every point of danger strengthened and made firm. The preparedness of the priest begins in his seminary days, when he is making ready first to launch forth on his noble and superhuman flight. But, just as the aviator needs often to renew his vigilance, and after every flight goes over his whole machine anew and tests and scrutinizes every part, so also must the priest time and again look to every element of his character, and make sure that there is no weak point, no incipient break, no strain of the bonds and joints, such as may hurl him down from his height to crashing ruin.

It is in something of this spirit that we have been examining the framework of our character by scrutinizing the three stout foundation parts of prudence, justice, and fortitude. These are the three most excellent of the moral virtues, because the one perfects the intelligence, the other the will and the intelligence, and the third the masterly will. Yet, the last of the cardinal virtues—on which we have now to speak—deserves just as earnest scrutiny, for though it has to do with less elevated elements in our being, yet the danger of a crash is always imminent for anyone who lacks this sturdy virtue, or fails to strengthen it to the right degree.

The Nature of Temperance

We are all familiar with the meaning of temperance. It is a habit which inclines a man to rule, in strict accordance with the dictates of right reason, his natural appetite for the pleasures of the senses. It is a moderation which governs reasonably that yearning for pleasures and delights which is so strong an instinct of the human heart. Temperance, we all remember, is very different from abstinence, because, while abstinence is the giving up entirely of this or that bodily pleasure, temperance consists in using the good things of the body as we should, and never abusing them.

Thus, we call a man temperate when he uses food and drink in just the way which the law of nature intends, is chaste and pure of body and mind, is self-controlled and modest in all his demeanor. These are not easy things to achieve. Here, as everywhere else, virtue lies in the golden mean, and human nature is inclined to excesses. It requires everlasting vigilance and self-control to use the good things of the body with absolute reasonableness.

Food and Health

Self-restraint and self-discipline in the use of food and drink are a form of temperance of which the practical importance is difficult to overemphasize for keeping the priest in condition to discharge his priestly office long and well. Modern medicine is forever stressing more and more the vast importance

of dietetics, both in the preservation of health and the cure of disease. To use the right sort of food in the right quantity at the right time, is a primary requisite for good health.

Any considerable and protracted departure from the right and reasonable way of taking nourishment is pretty sure to meet with retribution, and the sickness which follows may be all the more severe because it is deferred. It is a little difficult for us to make ourselves realize that the laws of diet are divine ordinances, and yet in a sense this is true. We violate the essential fitness of things by either excess or defect in eating. Even where there is no moral obligation involved, right reason ought to induce everyone to observe the golden mean in eating and drinking.

Temperance in Eating

There is no question but many precious lives are cut short by faults in eating, and experience seems to show that these faults usually lean toward eating too much of certain sorts of food. Too much sugar tends to cause diabetes; excessive quantities of meat tend to injure the kidneys; the failure to eat raw food and green vegetables, to drink enough milk, may sometimes result in a weakening of the system through a lack of the proper elements of nutrition.

A healthy diet is a well-balanced diet. Not too much meat nor too much starch or sugar, and enough milk and fresh vegetables—on such a diet most men can work hard and live long in the priestly office,

whereas an unbalanced diet, chosen merely according to tastes or habits, may cripple us in early middle age and bring us to an untimely grave.

Reasonable Care

Now, there is no question that to follow a reasonable regimen requires a high degree of the virtue of temperance. Unlike some of the lower animals, civilized man can no longer trust his own appetites. Civilization has brought such an abundance of food to everyone's door that choice and self-control are more essential than ever. Reason and the right knowledge of practical dietetics are needed by every professional man nowadays, if he is to keep efficient.

To apply these principles to one's life and to observe them day after day often requires a high degree of temperance. Every priest should scrutinize his life from this viewpoint, and insist on cultivating right habits of taking nourishment. Too often, when diseases caused by wrong eating are discovered, it is too late to cure them. An ounce of prevention in this regard is worth many pounds of cure.

Individual Variations

This matter requires the more prudence because every individual is to a certain extent a law unto himself. While the general rules of dietetics are uniform, their particular application has to vary with individuals. There is a saying variously expressed, but the gist of it is that at the age of forty, every man

is either a fool or a physician. Having lived with himself for forty years, it is reasonable to expect a man to know by that time the peculiarities of his own constitution. But to observe those peculiarities and respect them requires the sturdy virtue of temperance.

One may apply this same series of reflections to the judging of the proper use of any bodily good. Among the most important of all our bodily needs is exercise, and the temperate use of bodily exercise often requires, on the part of the priest, a good deal of determination. In this age of automobiles and easy transportation it is a constant temptation to neglect to take exercise.

For want of exercise, the bodily organs degenerate, the system is weakened, and a man's ability to work is lessened to such a degree that he often finds it impossible to keep on and breaks down before his time. This failure to take exercise, viewed as an overindulgence in physical rest and repose, is a violation of the virtue of temperance. The right and reasonable use of exercise, neither sinning by excess or defect, requires an exercise of the virtue.

The Roots of the Seven Deadly Sins

Let us recall that, from time immemorial, the moralists have warned us of seven radical tendencies in human nature, which, if uncontrolled, bear the evil fruit of the seven deadly sins. In themselves, these tendencies are common to human nature and are not sinful; but they are full of danger, and it is the part

of the virtue of temperance to keep them all within bounds. To pride, which is an overweening love of one's own excellence, temperance opposes humbleness, which moderates the appetite for praise and makes men tolerant of insult and injury.

To covetousness, that excessive craving for the goods of this world and the desire for earthly possessions for their own sake, temperance opposes the virtue of moderation in seeking possessions, of open-handed generosity, of a detachment from the things of this world. To the excessive desire of bodily pleasure, temperance opposes the spirit of self-control and self-denial, modesty and a chaste mind, and all the virtues which go with continence. How necessary these virtues are to the priest, need hardly be pointed out. No man can be Christlike without them, and Christ Himself invited us all to follow His perfect example, when He said: "Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart."

In Christlike Men

The same may be said of the other sources of the deadly sins and of the virtues opposed to them. These virtues should all shine out in Christlike men, and be the special mark of the priesthood. To anger, the tendency to indulge excessively in anger or to grow angry unreasonably, temperance opposes the virtue of meekness, which, with humility, Christ bids us specially to learn of Him. To gluttony, it opposes moderation in eating and drinking.

To envy, it opposes the reasonable control of our own desires of excellence, and a generous wish that the excellence of others may be recognized and their good qualities praised and rewarded. Finally, to sloth, temperance opposes moderation in rest and in the use of leisure, the virtue which a man needs to make him take sufficient exercise, do his work faithfully and persistently, prefer the spiritual interests of others to his own comfort and ease.

Running over the list and considering the various manifestations of these tendencies of our human nature, every man will perceive his predominant fault, and against this he must wage a lifelong struggle, being content if, after many years, he wins a victory.

An Encouraging Reflection

In this necessary strife and warfare against self, we may encourage ourselves by the thought that, if we succeed in overcoming our predominant fault, all other defects in our character will be proportionately corrected. What more sublime victory than to change our predominant fault into its characteristically opposite virtue! Yet, this was the achievement of many of the saints of God.

When we see a saint inclined to great penance, a model of mortification, we often find that this excellent virtue is the result of a lifelong struggle against the tendency to self-indulgence. The saints most noted for humility are frequently the very ones whose predominant fault was pride. So, by courage-

ous struggles, nature is remade, and the development of the characteristic virtue opposed to one's predominant fault gives a wonderful symmetry to character.

When we look over this list of faults, the reflection is inevitable that some of the deadly sins and the tendencies which they represent are far more feared and guarded against than others. Pride, covetousness, lust, anger, and even gluttony, by their very motions, alarm the virtuous man. These faults are known as they are and dreaded accordingly. But envy and sloth—both deadly sins if yielded to in serious matters and with full deliberation and consent—are often much less feared than they should be.

Envy the Vice of the Good

One is indeed tempted to say that envy is a pet vice of the good. Men who shrink from most other occasions of sin will sometimes contrive, with a pitiful ingenuity, to disguise the vice of envy under the cloak of zeal, of common sense, of caution, of a dozen other virtues. Many who are honeycombed with jealousy and envy, steadfastly refuse to recognize their own sad state. For all that they are really envious, and their envy does much harm to others.

This pest, envy, ruins good enterprises, and, sad indeed to say, it sometimes blights and withers fine characters and noble aspirations that would have flowered out in the sunshine of friendliness and approval. There is no one who has not reason to search his heart for traces of jealousy and envy. If

any there be who on reading such a statement declare offhand that, whatever may be true of others, envy and jealousy are strangers to their character, then it is just these unfortunate people who should most fear that envy is strong in their hearts.

Spiritual Sloth

Another very prevalent fault of our day is the old-fashioned one of sloth. One scarcely ever hears a sermon on sloth nowadays; it seems to be out of the fashion to speak of it. Yet, the thing itself still flourishes—spiritual sloth, in particular, the deadliest form of all. This shows itself in a disinclination for spiritual things, a distaste for prayer and good reading. This fault is encouraged by the multiplied distractions of our times, by the interests of modern life, and even by the very pressure of work and the many good excuses people think they have for hurrying over prayers, making little meditation and hardly any spiritual reading. The virtue of temperance needs to be very definite and strong to make any real headway against these two vices of envy and sloth.

These brief reflections on such an important virtue will serve as a framework and outline for thought and self-examination and self-counsel. It has been wisely said that the difference between good and evil men, between the saint and the sinner, is not that the one has temptations and the other none, but rather that the saint has temptations and overcomes them, while the sinner has temptations and yields to them. All mankind shares in the primitive impulses which,

yielded to wrongfully in grievous matters, give rise to the seven deadly sins. Every human being, therefore, has to choose between subduing these impulses or giving rein to them, to his own and others' destruction.

Temperance a Priestly Virtue

Since the priest is to be "another Christ," few virtues are more necessary to him, or should shine out with greater beauty in his character, than this virtue of temperance in all its manifestations. Temperance is the conquest of the animal nature, the ruling of bodily impulses, the subduing of the flesh by the spirit. This conquest is especially Christlike; it specially distinguishes those who closely follow Christ the Lord.

"Do you wish to be a virgin? . . . Conquer the body, conquer the lusts of the flesh, conquer the world in the spirit of God; conquer those vain things of the present world, . . . conquer the dragon, conquer the lion, conquer the serpent, overcome satan by Jesus Christ, Who will strengthen you by the hearing of His words and the Holy Eucharist. Take up your cross and follow Him Who has made you clean, Jesus Christ . . . for whoever walks perfect in faith and fears not, he truly receives the crown of virginity, which, as it is the fruit of great labour, so also has a great reward." (*Ep. Clem.* I, 5.)

An Example to the People

The example of the priest showing the rule of right reason in his actions through the practice of

temperance, is an eloquent example to all his people to do likewise. Actions are much more persuasive than words. Even the simplest persons can recognize and appreciate the beauty and dignity, the self-dominion and self-governance which come from temperance. Nor will anything else take the place of this virtue, especially in those who are devoted to the salvation of souls and bear the character of ambassador of Christ.

Wherefore, to return to our original comparison, it behooves all those who have, with God's grace, aspired to the lofty heights of the priesthood, to look often to this virtue, to attend to all its stays and fastenings, to guard well lest any of its bonds and joints grow loosened or insecure. For no man ever remained lifted high over the earth in the pure airs of a worthy priesthood without the virtue of temperance.

IX. THE KINDNESS OF THE PRIEST

EVERY priest, whether he likes it or not, is a public character, a public official, a diplomatic representative of the Most High God. When a man becomes a priest, he puts off, so to say, his own person to put on the person of Christ. Henceforth, what he does and says is not significant of himself, but of God. The word "diplomatic" has come to mean "tactful," skillful in dealing with others so as to win their good will, able to avoid offense, to win hearts, to get one's way in the face of difficulties.

It has received this meaning because those who are chosen for the diplomatic service—to represent their sovereign or their government abroad—must exercise tact, serviceableness, kindliness, and politeness in order to accomplish their difficult mission. It ought to be evident, therefore, that every priest should be a heavenly diplomat, a true gentleman in the sense of Cardinal Newman's definition, a man who never gives unnecesary pain or offense, is possessed of cultivated kindness, and can deal with others in such a way as to leave with them an agreeable impression, while he gains the end which he is commissioned to gain.

Interior and Exterior Kindness

Interior kindness is one of the most charming attributes of true charity. Those who have real, divine charity are uniformly kind in their inward

dispositions, their judgment of others, their attitude toward others. They make allowance and excuses for others in their hearts. They look always for the best characteristics of those about them, and overlook the defects of those with whom they deal, where duty does not oblige them to censure or correct.

This interior kindness is an absolute necessity for true exterior kindness. It would be a sort of hypocrisy if we treated people gently only exteriorly, while we disliked and censured them within. Moreover, it is almost impossible, except for consummate actors, to keep up a show of exterior kindness which will ring true, unless at the same time we are genuinely kind within.

We take it for granted, then, that the priest ought to be as kind interiorly as possible. It is necessary, if he would resemble Christ. The whole character of our Lord was eloquent of kindness. In all the Gospels, we read not one word of His which was anything but kind. Even His rebukes to the scribes and Pharisees were the truest kindness, because they stripped away the cloak of hyprocrisy from these men, and revealed to themselves and to others their true nature.

Christ's Gentleness

But how gentle Christ was with the poor, how considerate with the afflicted! Even when He seemed to rebuke the Canaanite woman, He did so only that He might make her joy all the greater, when He finally healed her daughter. The Heart of Jesus was

full of kindness, because it was full of charity. The wise priest, therefore, watches over the slightest favouritism, dislike, animosity, anger, or revenge, within him. Because, like the "flaw within the lute, which widening makes the music mute," even a little rift of inward animosity and anger may sadly make still the sweet music of kindness.

True Priestly Kindness is Universal

To be real and true, kindness, like charity, must be universal. We cannot pick and choose to whom we shall be kindly, if we are kind because of the supernatural love of others. A priest who allows himself to grow offended, or impatient, or censorious of human faults and failings, does himself more harm than all the perversity of mankind could do him. We have to match unalterable kindness against any provocation that we may meet with and come out victorious in order to be like Christ. For He was kind even to His executioners, and prayed for them at the very moment when they were doing Him to death.

There is no doubt that this virtue of kindness is often put to a very severe strain in our priestly ministry. The priest has to deal with all manner of characters, with all classes of people. Some of these are very vexatious, others are very unprepossessing, others are provoking to an extreme degree. Merely to be patient, and to tolerate the faults and foibles of

others, is often a severe strain; but to be uniformly kind to everyone is, under some circumstances, a heroism. Yet, no one ever exercised this heroism to such a degree as did Christ, and to be Christlike we must be heroically kind.

The Outward Signs of Kindness

It is the exterior manifestation of the priest's kindness which deserves ever more attention. There is no need of argument to convince us that we should be interiorly kind. But the consistent practice of exterior kindness, the showing of friendliness and good will to everyone in all our speech and conduct—this is an art which needs very special efforts to acquire.

One would perhaps be justified in saying that there are all too many priests who may indeed be kind inwardly, but who, by their exterior conduct, give people a very poor idea of how very kind they are. As we judge others by their looks, their gestures, their words and intonations of voice, and all that we see and hear from them; and as we cannot penetrate their interior dispositions except by means of the outward signs they give, so also others must judge of us from what they see, and from what they hear of us.

The priest, in the midst of his flock, is constantly an object of careful observation. People watch his actions, the expressions of his face; they listen to his words, and remark his tones and inflections; and then, necessarily, they judge from these whether or not he

is kind. Our heart may be full to overflowing of the most Christlike sentiments of kindness to all men; and yet, if we have a forbidding look, a harsh voice, a rude way of speaking, our interior kindness may be lost upon those about us. On the other hand, the outward expression of kindness—by pleasant looks, gentle words, a kind tone—moves the hearts of others almost irresistibly.

Our Offhand Ways

It is unfortunate that the too-prevalent custom of speaking in offhand fashion, of suppressing our real feelings, and assuming a conventional, standardized manner, may also give the impression of a lack of kindness. It should be an object of study with us to express effectively the inward sentiments of esteem, good will, charity, interest, and sympathy which we feel for others.

Many persons' faces are like a mask; they have hardly any power of expression. One reason for this is that people naturally wish to conceal their feelings and not to appear to be moved by passing events, and so they conceal their kindness also. If you watch the folk on the streets, you will see that most of them are wearing masks. Their features are composed into an artifical stillness, because they are thinking their own thoughts, and do not wish to have every passer-by detect whether these are joyful or sorrowful. Among primitive or very emotional peoples it is not so. Watch the faces on the street in some city in southern

France or Italy, and listen to the conversation and bits of song, the voices now loud, now low.

Our habit of self-repression, of wearing a mask, isolates us to some extent from one another. There is a great deal of self-consciousness in modern society, which is evidenced by the fact that everyone tries to be as like as possible to everyone else, and this uniformity represses individual manifestations of interest and kindness. In dealing with his people, therefore, the priest has to make a special effort not only to be inwardly kind, but to show his kindness exteriorly. He must do this with prudence, but generously, for how can they guess how kind he is within, unless he shows his kindness outwardly?

The Kindness of Good Manners

All the observances of courtesy, the considerateness, and the social forms which we sum up under the words "good manners," are an absolute duty for the priest. No man who bears the character of Christ has a right to be anything but polite, in the real and genuine sense of the word. Courtesy and politeness are the established and accepted expressions of kindness and considerateness to others.

The priest has to deal with the lofty and the humble, but he should be just as polite to the one as to the other. Poor and simple people, especially when they are discouraged and downhearted, appreciate politeness to a degree that is quite remarkable. Of course, the politeness of the priest ought to be of

that deeply genuine, spontaneous, and unaffected kind which expresses the real kindness of the heart.

One of the greatest vehicles of either kindness or unkindness is the voice. Unkind words, especially from a priest, cut like a knife, and they are never forgotten. The priest who allows himself to speak really unkind words to anyone whomsoever, is doing a great injustice to Christ Whom he represents. It is unfortunately true of our poor human nature that we forget hundreds of kindnesses more easily than one thrust of unkind speech.

Sarcasm which cuts to the heart, ridicule, harsh judgments—these things are intolerable in the conduct of the ambassador of Christ. When we unhappily fail in this regard, we should apologize most generously. Even an apology may not make the injured heart forget, but it will move it to forgive.

A Tone of Kindness

Not only the words a man utters, but the tones in which he speaks are eloquent. The same words, uttered in one tone, convey a gentle rebuke or even an encouragement; spoken in another tone, they may be the most merciless and scarifying sarcasm. The voice of the priest should be eloquent—as was surely the voice of Christ—of gentleness, culture, and kindliness.

The education of the voice, its development, the modulations of its tones to convey genuine feeling and sincere kindness, are of more importance in the

career of the priest than most people realize. Not only in the pulpit, where he utters the word of God to the people, but in his ordinary, everyday conversation with individual members of his flock, the voice of the priest gives its message over and beyond his words. Men's voices and tones of speech may become vibrant with kindness, sympathy, and tenderness. Like the voice of a violin in the hands of a master, they can express the depth and beauty of human feeling and emotion.

The Face of the Priest

The face of the priest should be eloquent of kindness. God gives to all of us a set of features, which it is not in our power fundamentally to change. But He puts the expression of our face in our own keeping. It has been said that all other features are made by God, but a man's mouth he makes for himself. This means only that our facial expression is the work of our will and our feelings. We have all seen a very homely countenance radiant and transformed by kindly, generous feeling, so that the rude features are beautiful with spiritual light. Who has not seen faces whose features are altogether lovely, but whose expression is cold and heartless, without a spark of human kindliness.

Insofar as concerns its contour and its features, we do not know what the countenance of our Lord looked like, but we do know that on those features rested the heavenly light of perfect kindness. The

face of the priest should be Christlike at least in this, that the charity and kindness of Christ shine forth thereon, insofar as it is possible for the inward disposition to affect the outward expression. Of course, it will always remain true that there are some countenances naturally so impassive that they never will be very expressive of any emotion, even of kindness. But, in such cases, the voice will respond to effort and cultivation; or at least the manner and actions of a man may by effort and self-discipline become kind. In one way or another, we must manifest exteriorly our inward kindness, if it is to have its effect upon those about us.

A Requisite for True Success

For our success in the sacerdotal ministry, kindness is of such importance that it can scarcely be overestimated. The lack of tact and gentleness, of sympathy and consideration for others, has ruined more good works and brought more worthy enterprises to naught than almost any other one characteristic. Who has not seen good and devoted priests who were continually in hot water with their parishioners, who could hardly get any cooperation, because they lacked the quality of evident kindness.

But, where the priest is kind, he can in the long run do almost anything with his people, because they cannot resist the influence of this quality, which lays siege to the heart, overpowers opposition, and persuades and conciliates the people more almost than

any other human characteristic. The long experience of human nature has shown that man's heart can only be led; it can never be driven. Physical force and stern insistence will overpower the body, but not the will and the mind. Even though they may cow the human will, they can never conquer the affections of the heart.

God Himself, when He came on earth to win the hearts of mankind, came in the gentle guise of an infant, and spent His whole life in being kind. He was dealing with free human beings, and, therefore, He dealt with them in a human manner, seeking not to crush but to win our hearts. Priests, who are the diplomats of God, the ambassadors dear to and blessed by Christ, can never find a better way than the way of their Master to fulfill His divine mission. As we are envoys of Christ, as we are "other Christs," so also we must exercise a Christlike, an evident and impartial kindness to all men.

X. THE AMIABILITY OF THE PRIEST

NO one will think it strange if, among the chief duties of the priest, we put the duty to be amiable. We take "amiable" in its primitive sense of lovable. In other words, it is one of the chief duties of the priest to be the sort of man that people love. If anyone doubts this, let him consider the character of Christ Whom the priest is so closely to imitate. No one can be *Alter Christus,* another Christ, without being preeminently lovable. We might know, even though there were no evidence of it, that Christ was the most lovable of men, both because of His person and His mission. In person He is the Infinite Love, become man. He is the Redeemer of mankind.

God's Lovableness

Now lovableness, amiability, is one of the dearest of all God's attributes and it is inconceivable that the Incarnate God should not be eminently lovable. We know that the vision of God in heaven will ravish the utmost love of our hearts. In proportion as God is revealed to us more and more perfectly, even here. His lovableness becomes more and more evident.

We see it in the stars and flowers, in dawns and sunsets, in the exquisite beauty of living things, as in the mountains and in the sea. We see it still more movingly in human character which is so amiable, so lovable in its finest manifestations. But most of all it must shine forth in the humanity of Christ, from

Whose eyes looks forth the Divine Person, on Whose voice comes to our ears the words of the Eternal Lovableness.

In a book published recently entitled *Mirrors of God* we have made an effort to show how wonderfully the lovableness of God is manifested in all beings. There are chapters on The Mirror of the Stars, The Mirror of Flowers, The Mirror of Science, The Mirror of History, but the book reaches its climax in The Mirror of Christ's Humanity, and the Mirror of Christ's Passion. It is in the life and death of Jesus that the lovableness of God is most movingly and most perfectly bodied forth. The same truth is brought home to us if we reflect that it is not the mission of Christ to dominate or compel human hearts as He could so easily have done, but to win them through love. We have already reflected how He came on earth as a little child, to steal into our hearts with all the lovableness of childhood. He spent His life making us realize His love of us by sharing in our toils and obscurity, our trials and sorrows. Then He mounted upon the Cross and gave us the greatest proof of love of which any man is capable, to lay down his life for his friends.

The Amiability of Our Lord

Such a Man must needs be full of amiability. Even if He were not the Man-God, the Incarnate Lovableness, God, Who sent Him to win all hearts, would have poured over Him the chrism of amiability,

for without being amiable, no man can win hearts. When, therefore, we contemplate Christ, the Model of the priest, we see that from every aspect, in every thought and word, in every action, He was the very soul and essence of amiability. The hearts of men flamed up with great love as He passed. A word from Him was enough to draw the twelve Apostles, simple, hardworking men, who must have loved their homes, to leave everything to follow Him. Wherever He went the crowds thronged about Him and pressed upon Him and this was not alone so that they might obtain a cure of their diseases. Five thousand followed Him into the desert, forgetful of rest and food.

Even after His death, or rather especially after His death, the lovableness of Christ continues to rule the hearts of men. His religion in its real achievements is a victory of love more than of fear. The love of Christ is the one chief motive which has actuated the greatest heroes and heroines in human history. Men will go far for fear, but they will go to any lengths for love, and the sweet follies of the saints, their amazing excesses of self-immolation were inspired by the love of Jesus. Men have to be led by their hearts in order to become worthy followers of Christ. Charity, the greatest of all the virtues, is the one virtue which most makes saints. In proportion as a man has greater or less charity, he is more or less really Christlike.

Jesus, therefore, when He came into the world to establish the Kingdom of His Father, came to found a

kingdom of love. He declared that He gave a new commandment to His followers, that they were to love one another. By this men shall know that they are His disciples, if they have love one for another. He made His own love for them the measure of their love for one another and this love was not to be based on their personable lovableness, but on God's lovableness. They were to love each other for His sake.

Our Love Must Be Unselfish

Among the great and fundamental duties of the priest, therefore, is to make men love Christ for His own sake and each other for the sake of Christ. But how can he accomplish this unless he, himself, is amiable and lovable? He, who takes the place of Christ and who represents before the people the spirit of Christ, must be Christlike in his amiability.

What is required in a priest that he may be amiable? This lovableness is something more than inward charity, more even than kindness, though the kindness of the priest, about which we have spoken already, is one of the chief elements of his amiability. The great St. Teresa of Avila, that wonderful woman who deserves the gratitude of all priests for her intense love of the priesthood, and her ardent prayers for priests, once remarked to her spiritual daughters, that they must try to make themselves beloved by all and that the means to this was to think nothing of themselves, to speak little of themselves, but to show to everyone a contempt of themselves,

together with a great esteem and love of others. Here, surely, is one of the most important elements of amiability.

Humble and Unselfish

It is much easier to describe than to achieve. Yet, if we will remember those characters whom we have met who are really lovable, who draw the hearts of others to themselves with a sincere and unsentimental affection, we will find that they are people who are fundamentally humble and unselfish. Though exterior manners and conduct have a good deal to do with amiability, nothing can supply that inward spirit of self-forgetfulness, gentleness, kind judgment, and interest in others which shines out in the conduct of amiable people. Thus, amiability, lovableness, in the sense in which we mean, is something different from popularity, different from good humor, from cheerfulness, even from kindness. It is a quality which wins hearts because the priest is himself full of goodness and mercy to others and because he forgets himself and gives himself wholly to the service of his people.

Contemplate the person of Christ as it is described to us in the Gospel. A wonderful lovableness shines out from every feature of the God-Man. He is utterly devoted to the wants of others. No weariness, nor the importunity of the crowd, nor the sin and misery about Him, nor the persecution of His enemies, nor the dullness and misconceptions of His friends, can shake ever so little His unalterable patience and

gentleness. He is full of sympathy for everyone, He never denies any plea that is made to Him. When for a short time He seems to be deaf to the request of the Canaanite woman, it is only that He may grant it abundantly when she has filled the measure of the supplications which His Father has required.

Interior Virtue Manifested

He labours incessantly, helping the bodies and souls of men, teaching in simple words the great truths of His Gospel. He seeks the most simple and vivid images from the world about Him to illustrate the truths of eternity. He condescends to the tastes of His people. They like stories, parables, concrete illustrations, and His speech abounds with them. He explains, He repeats, He encourages, He exhorts. When He has occasion to rebuke, His rebukes are stern and faithful, without bitterness, but He is as lovable and as amiable in the midst of His righteous anger as when He is weeping over Jerusalem. The secret of Christ's amiableness is His goodness, His patience, His weariless kindness, His self-devotion, His self-forgetfulness. So must this be the secret of the amiableness of the priest, that "other Christ." It is the life a man leads, his thoughts, his desires, his aspirations, his attitude toward others, that make him truly amiable.

Who can doubt that this amiability of Christ was perfectly expressed in His outward demeanour? A deep sincerity, a perfect frankness, made His every

word and act vibrate with His inward kindness and love. Men have a sixth sense to detect insincerity. They may not know why, but an assumed love and charity does not move them. Nothing can supply for the inward fire of goodness which gives warmth and light to the exterior manner of a man. The lovableness of the priest, therefore, must begin from within and must be manifested as Christ's was by a charming exterior. While the interior spirit is all important, the outward manifestation is similarly necessary. No one can love what he does not know and no one can adequately know a man's intimate spirit unless it be suitably manifested by outward acts.

The Art of Behaviour

The art of behaviour is the finest of the fine arts, and it is a very neglected art in our day and generation. There are some people who consider pleasing manners an affectation, but when they come in contact with a man who really has such manners, they are insensibly charmed and attracted. The essence of fine behaviour is tact and considerateness for others. A man who wishes to be thoroughly amiable has to school himself so that he will avoid giving offense in any regard.

This amiable behaviour is best learned, of course, when one is young and the atmosphere of the seminary is unfortunately not always very favourable to it. When a great many men live together, their conduct is more likely to be marked by a bluff, good

fellowship, than by any great tact or considerateness. Yet a priest ought to be the best-behaved of men in the true sense of fine behaviour. We cannot imagine our Lord being anything but polite, gentle, considerate, and His manners were certainly the most pleasing manners of His time. Though He lived in the midst of rude fishermen, we may be sure that He did not descend to the manners of fishermen.

Men sometimes make a mistake of thinking that when they deal with the poor and the simple, they had best be somewhat rough and uncouth in their manners. But the simple and the poor are often more sensitive than other folk. Priests living a good deal alone and without the criticism that comes from the give and take of ordinary social life, are likely to acquire mannerisms and ways of acting which make them, if not unamiable, at least much less amiable. No one ventures to comment or make any complaint. But the influence of such mannerisms and ways of acting is none the less very real and considerable, and it is unfavourable to the amiability of the priest.

Shining From Within

All these things a man must take into account if he wishes to be thoroughly lovable, for the quality of amiability, shining from within, irradiates and influences the outward man. A great model of priestly amiability is offered by St. Francis de Sales, that exquisite gentleman and great saint, who exercised an almost magic influence over his contemporaries, winning the hearts even of the most hostile

heretics and whose beautiful personality continues to sway men's hearts, many years after his death.

St. Francis had exceptional opportunities to cultivate the exterior elements of amiability. He was born of a house where fine manners were traditional, and from his earliest years he saw about him the finest courtesy, which he instinctively imitated. Yet, we have his own testimony to the fact that his amiability was not so easily secured as by the mere cultivation of fine manners. He had by nature, as he told one of his friends, a harsh and rather stern character, and it was the work of years for him to subdue all unkindness and irritability. So remarkable was his control over himself that for many years of his life, he was the very pattern of gentleness and sweetness. Never was he known to hurt the feelings of anyone and even when he had a severe rebuke to administer, he did it in such a kindly, gentle way that the rebuked one was not offended, but loved him all the more, though he could "feel beneath the velvet glove the hand of steel."

A Living Image of Christ

To see the holy bishop in all the various works of his apostolic zeal was to see before one a living image of Jesus Christ in His kind and meek ministrations to mankind. His countenance was full of sweetness, his words full of affectionate wisdom. He never antagonized anyone nor wounded any heart.

To call attention to this quality in priestly con-

duct, must stir in each reader's mind helpful and soul-searching thoughts. How amiable are we to those about us? — that is to say, how lovable? How far do our interior disposition and our exterior conduct reflect the gentleness, the considerateness of Christ? Self-sacrifice, the spirit of impartial and supernatural goodness, a zeal for souls which glows inwardly and is expressed in outward actions, an unalterable patience, a sympathy that goes out to everyone, these things go to make up a truly amiable priest.

Prayer and Practice

How is a man to achieve such a desirable but difficult quality? The same means offer themselves as for acquiring any other virtue; namely, prayer and practice. Prayer will obtain from God the grace that gives us light to see wherein we fail in this excellent quality, and strength to make the efforts necessary to smooth down the rough edges of our character, and make ourselves all things to all men. But it is only by constant effort, by unremitting practice of all that goes to make up the amiable character that we shall really change our character and achieve what we desire.

From the standpoint of the success of our ministry and of our own personal merit, there are few things more desirable, more worth praying and striving for, than the cultivation of true and Christlike lovableness which draws with it so many other beautiful virtues and makes our ministrations irresistible to human hearts.

XI. THE ZEAL OF THE PRIEST

THE derivation of a word often throws a great light upon its meaning. So, when we learn that the word "zeal" comes from a Greek expression meaning "to boil" or "to pulsate with heat," this brings home to us the more vividly that zeal is the effect of the fire of love, is, indeed, love expressed in action. Thus, when we speak of "zeal for souls" we mean the pulsing and eager energy to save souls, those outward efforts for the salvation of souls, which are the result of inward charity. True priestly zeal for souls, is, therefore, the outward expression of the inward flame of love of God, and of one's neighbour for the sake of God.

It is very evident that the priest, as "another Christ," is called to a special inward charity for God and his neighbour. It is evident, too, that he ought to possess, and show, especial zeal, which is the outward manifestation of that charity. Real love always shows itself in action for the benefit of the one who is loved. If we do not work and make efforts to show our charity, this is proof of the coldness of our charity. Without charity, zeal cannot be genuine, and without zeal charity lies open to suspicion. Both must go together, and one helps the other.

The Beauty of Priestly Zeal

The zeal of a good priest is a very beautiful thing. He spends himself for his people. He does not

measure out his work for them, nor check off what he will do and what he will not do, but he makes the limit of his ability the limit of his service. In the literal sense of the word, he does "all that he can." Even with a very moderate equipment of talent, natural forces, or that intangible, precious thing which we call "personality," the priest can do wonders if he has this active zeal, this "boiling up" of charity into outward good works. Nothing can take the place of zeal in priestly work, not talent, nor an agreeable character, nor worldly influence. When the priest is declared to be prudently zealous and zealously prudent, his essential praise has been spoken.

Love the Greatest of Motives

It is to the credit of human nature that love is the greatest of all its motive powers, and that the love of God is the strongest of all loves. Men will work more faithfully, constantly, and unwearyingly for the love of God than for selfish gain, provided always that they have enough of the love of God to nerve them and impel them to that labour. This is why priests who are quite ordinary men, so far as talents and accomplishments are concerned, do superhuman work and effect marvels because of their zeal. The example of the Curé d'Ars, a simple country priest, recently raised to the altars of the Church, brings this home to us quite vividly.

His education was very meager, his early schooling poor. He began to study for the priesthood when he

was much older than most seminarists. He knew so little Latin that he had to study his course of philosophy in French. After failing in his examinations for entrance to the seminary, he barely succeeded in getting through and being admitted on a reexamination. Finally, being ordained, he was sent to a remote little country town to be assistant to a friend of his; and then, on the friend's death, was made parish priest of Ars, an insignificant village, where the people were by no means given overmuch to piety and devotion.

The Zeal of the Curé d'Ars

But the heart of the simple priest of Ars was full of divine love, which manifested itself in a marvelous zeal for souls. He began with the people of his own village, and worked unwearyingly to reclaim them from evil and to bring them to the fervent practice of religion. Little by little, the fame of his holiness and of the wonderful zeal and skill he possessed for the direction of souls, traveled far and wide, first through France, then through Europe, and finally throughout the civilized world.

People began to pour in from every quarter of the globe. The little parish church of Ars became a place of pilgrimage. Men and women, in every rank of life, brought their sins and sorrows to the feet of this lover of souls.

A superhuman strength, at once the result and the reward of his zeal, sustained this simple priest through labours, the very recital of which makes one tremble.

He was perpetually at work, by night and by day, helping souls. Day and night he was beseiged by insistent multitudes. For the last ten years of his life he spent sixteen and sometimes eighteen hours a day in the confessional.

Toward the end, twenty thousand persons visited Ars every year. These people came for all manner of purposes, to ask his advice in every sort of difficulty, to confess every kind of sin, to get his help to decide their vocation, to obtain comfort in their sickness. Merely to read the account, the manner of his daily life, for years before he died, is astounding. He used to arise after two or three hours of sleep, and go to his church in the small hours of the morning. There he would find a crowd, waiting for his coming, so as to go to confession. He would leave the confessional only to say Mass and preach, and would then return again until noon.

At noon, he went into his own little house, which one may still visit, as a place of pilgrimage, and took his frugal meal. How wretched was his food, one may conjecture from the fact that it was his custom each week to boil a pot full of potatoes for himself, and then to eat them cold for the rest of the week. At the end of his solitary meal, he went into the parish residence to confer with his assistant priests; then, back into the pulpit or into the confessional to listen once more to the streams of penitents until late at night, when he would retire again to his wretched abode to snatch his few hours of sleep.

The Service of Forty-One Years

It was pure priestly zeal which enabled this holy man thus constantly to keep up a way of life beyond the powers of nature. Yet he sustained this terrible ordeal for many years, until he died at the age of seventy-three. His career of priestly zeal had continued for forty-one unbroken years. During all this time, the amount of food and sleep he took seemed utterly insufficient, even to sustain life, much less to strengthen him for such superhuman labours.

When he had been parish priest of Ars for seventeen years, the bishop forbade him to attend the annual retreat of the clergy, because, he said, there were so many people flocking to Ars, who needed his help.

When the Curé d'Ars began his pastorate, that little village was utterly obscure and unknown. When he laid down his weary bones, after forty-one years of priestly zeal, the town was famous throughout the Catholic world. The great ones of the earth had come to kneel at the feet of this simple old man, to seek counsel on their most important affairs. Bishops had asked his spiritual aid and advice, great preachers had come to sit beneath his pulpit, to hear the plain words, full of unearthly fire, which fell from his lips, in a voice scarcely audible, but which moved men's souls more than any worldly eloquence could have done.

Every priest, dwelling on the career of the Curé d'Ars, can better realize the meaning of priestly zeal,

and its mighty power to transform a simple, unlearned priest into a tower of strength, a giant of apostolic labours, a light, not only to his own parish and neighbourhood, but to the entire nation in which he lives, and indeed, to the entire Church.

The Zeal of St. Francis de Sales

Since we learn best by examples, let us look at another model of priestly zeal, marvelously different from the Curé d'Ars in most things, but like him in sanctity and thirst for souls. Francis de Sales was a member of a great family of Savoy. He was destined for a brilliant career by his birth, his talents, and training. Admitted to the practice of the law, he was just about to be given the dignity of senator, and his father had chosen for his bride one of the noblest and richest maidens of Savoy. When he insisted on becoming a priest, the Bishop of Geneva obtained for Francis the highest office in his diocese after his own—that of provost of the chapter of Geneva.

But the zeal of Francis de Sales was not content with high offices. He threw himself with burning charity into the same sort of work which made the Curé d'Ars a mighty power for good. He heard confessions unwearyingly. He preached and wrote. At the peril of his life, he undertook to spread the true Faith in Le Chablais, a stronghold of virulent heresy. His flaming zeal joined to a kindness and gentleness which won men's hearts, gained, first the attention,

then the good will, and the conversion of multitudes. Chosen coadjutor to the Bishop of Geneva when he was but thirty-one years of age, he visited Paris on his return from a trip to Rome, and there Henry IV wished to keep him in France. But he went back to Geneva, succeeded to the Bishopric, and continued, in his loftier station, the weariless exercise of zeal that had characterized him as a young priest. His food, his dress, his household, were as simple as could be. He cut off all unnecessary expenses so that he might have more to give to the poor.

Love Expressed in Action

His labours were extraordinary in their diversity and constancy. He provided catechetical instructions for all the faithful, children and adults. He visited even the most remote parishes, far up in the mountains of his diocese. He preached unwearyingly, in his own diocese and in other dioceses. During his last stay of about a year in Paris, the clamours of the people made it necessary for him to go to the pulpit every day, and speak to them. He heard numberless confessions, wrote hosts of leaflets and scattered them among the heretics, composed books which are used to this day for spiritual reading.

With all these labours, he found time to be, with St. Jane de Chantal, one of the founders of the Visitation Sisterhood. His correspondence, which was prompted by zeal for souls, and aimed in great part at giving spiritual direction to the host of people who

wrote him, was almost without limits. In the midst of all this tremendous and incessant activity, Francis de Sales maintained a calmness, a patience, a gentleness, a charm of manner and sweetness of soul, which have become a proverb in the Church of God. When he died, in his fifty-sixth year, he was already enshrined in the hearts of all who knew him, as in the case of the Curé d'Ars, his beatification and canonization followed with comparative swiftness upon his death.

Here are two priests strikingly different in natural gifts, birth, education, training, yet whose careers are wonderfully alike in their spirit and zeal. Take away from the Curé d'Ars his fiery zeal, and you would have a very plain country priest, devoid of natural attractiveness, utterly incapable of reaping any very great harvest of souls. Take away from Francis de Sales that same zeal, and you would have a cultured gentleman, a polished ecclesiastic, a man entirely different from the Curé d'Ars. It is the fire of zeal which has made both these natures glow and flame with heavenly light until each has become alike, a beacon in the darkness of earth, drawing to its warmth and beauty countless souls.

Inward Love Means Outward Labour

Every priest, no matter what his talent or lack of talent, his natural gifts and acquired accomplishments, or his simplicity and lowliness, may take courage from the one or the other of these examples of

zeal. If it had been our happy fortune to meet either one or the other of these great lovers of God and man, and we had asked him, "What is the essential requisite for priestly zeal, the swiftest means for its acquirement, and the surest way of persevering and growing ever more zealous?" he would without question have replied that it is the love of God which forms the source and inspiration of true priestly zeal.

Since zeal is "love in action," inward love must be the inspiration of outward zeal. A man may be of a very active disposition, may throw himself into outward enterprises, may build many churches and conduct many activities, but without this spirit of inward love, such outward enterprises are not truly zealous.

On the other hand, a man who has the real love of God in his heart, and who loves souls for the sake of God, cannot help engaging in exterior activities when the occasion arises, and it is God's will that he shall labour for the salvation of souls. Then, the genuine zeal of his exterior labours, the fervour and perseverance with which he pursues souls to bring them to Christ, is a most trustworthy measure of his genuine, interior love.

The Sphere of Most Priests

This outward zeal for souls may take different forms, according to the circumstances under which Providence puts the priest. Most priests find their sphere of labour very much like that of the Curé d'Ars,

and the simple works of the parish, hearing confessions, saying Mass, preaching, visiting the sick, managing parish activities and organizations, are the destined and providential avenues of their zeal. A far lesser number of priests are called to a state like that of Francis de Sales, a state of dignity and honour where they can and should exercise the same virtues and undergo similar labours, though under different circumstances.

To some priests, the opportunity is given of preaching, teaching, writing; others still may find the chief outlet of their zeal for souls in patient suffering and hidden prayer. The desire to pray and to suffer always goes with true zeal for souls, and no man who is called to the priesthood ought to be without that sublime desire to imitate Christ in suffering and praying for the salvation of mankind. But the wish to use one's talents to write if one can write, to preach, to spread God's kingdom, is likewise a part of zeal.

The Inspiration

The Curé d'Ars has left behind him sermons and sayings, lovingly preserved, and which show clearly that the inspiration of his amazing zeal was none other than the love of God and of man. But St. Francis de Sales, whom Pope Pius IX proclaimed in 1877, a doctor of the universal Church, is much more explicit and methodical in his teaching. In his works, which deal so largely with the love of God, the Saint points out that love is the fulfillment of the law, that

to love God as we should we must subdue our lower nature, and put off inordinate selfishness, mortifying our mind and our will from the motive of love.

This inward spirit of the love of God, as he points out, will result in an outward life of generous fidelity to the will of God, and in the constant, cheerful performance of our duty, as perfectly as we can, because therein the will of God is manifested to us.

This is the simple formula for a zealous priestly life, that the priest, for the love of God, should subdue himself, should put off all inordinate inclinations or attachments to creatures, and should give himself to his duty, for the love of God and man, as diligently and as perfectly as possible. This teaching of the great doctor of the spiritual life is applicable to all men, but especially to the priests of God, who are bound in such a particular way to imitate the zeal of Christ.

The Secret of Zeal

We have here, then, the heart of the whole question of priestly zeal. The secret of zeal is love. Where the priest is faithful to all his duties, works untiringly for the salvation of souls, is urged on by an inward charity that leads him to spend his whole life in praying for souls, seeking for souls, working for souls, then that priest may be consoled with the thought that his zeal is a light and consolation to the Church, and that the inspiration of that zeal is divine love. Where a priest falls short of the zeal he should possess, the reason of that defect is a lack of divine love.

Here, surely, is true, to a sublime degree, that saying of St. Augustine, "Love God and do what you please." So will that other saying of the great Doctor be verified in the zealous priest, "Where there is love, there is no labour; but if there be labour, the labour itself is loved."

XII. THE PRIEST'S HAPPINESS

PRIESTS, more than other men, have a right to a happy life. Of pleasures they have few. Their recreations are necessarily circumscribed. The things which men and women in the world consider necessary for happiness, they have in large measure renounced by their very vocation. But for all these reasons they have the more right to be happy.

We know that happiness is one thing and pleasure and self-indulgence quite another. Pleasure seeking, self-indulgent people are never happy. They are essentially discontented, seeking one anodyne of pleasure after another, to still their inward gnawings. If a priest were to try to be happy as they try to be happy, he would make a calamitous mistake. Happiness is in a contented mind, a pure and calm spirit. It is synonymous with interior peace and joy. Of these, the priest may have his fill.

The Happiness of Christ

Jesus Christ, our Divine Model, Whose other selves we are, was the happiest of all human beings who ever lived on earth. His blessed Mother, in spite of her sorrows and privations, was the happiest of all mere creatures. We know that this must have been so because these two were most perfectly united with God, the one by the hypostatic union, the other by reason of her pure love of God and the abundance of graces bestowed upon her.

Peace and joy, therefore, dwelt in their hearts to the fullest degree, at all times and in spite of the intensest suffering. Pleasure and suffering cannot go together, but joy and suffering, by a mystery of God's power, often do go together. The joy of Christ's Heart, therefore, in its calm and perfect peace, was unruffled even in the midst of His intense sufferings and He was always happy, and never, for a moment, unhappy.

Now, the priest in his imitation of Christ, and in order to become "another Christ," ought especially to imitate his Divine Model in this interior happiness. It is his vocation to be happy, to preserve interior peace and joy, just as it is his vocation to be Christ-like. He will do his work better, bear his labours better, if he is happy. He will be able to sway and influence others and to win their hearts more easily if, within him, and in his outward manner, he shines and glows in the appealing radiance of happiness.

It is a very wise and perfect thing, therefore, for each priest to consider with himself how happy he truly is and to weigh all that makes him happy, and to ask what obstacles and hindrances there still exist to his happiness. It may be literally said that every priest can be happy at heart if he wishes it, and that every unhappiness that is in his life is his own fault or his own defect.

Lord, What Wilt Thou?

When we consider the essentials which make for happiness, we find foremost among them a true and

genuine resignation to the Will of God. This goes far to explain the unruffled contentment of the saints and it lies at the very root of all true happiness. "Thou art just, O Lord, and Thy judgments are right!" "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to Thy word"; "Speak Lord, Thy servant heareth"; "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" These sayings of the inspired Word and from the lips of the Blessed Mother, of the great Apostle, and of the child Samuel, express a spirit of complete union with and resignation to the divine Will of God.

To the priest who practices this complete resignation, everything is joyful, everything is good and holy, because all comes from the Hand of God. The successes he meets with, the vexations which come his way, the kind acts done him, the injuries inflicted upon him, the love of friends and the hatred of enemies, are all only different expressions of the Will of God. No man, and especially no priest, can be truly happy without this deep and genuine resignation to the Will of God, without willing what God wills and being pleased with what He desires.

If a man seeks his own will and insists on his own way, he is inevitably doomed to disappointment. The most domineering men of history never succeeded in having their own way very long or very thoroughly. Caesar was a disappointed man before he fell under the dagger of the assassin. Alexander was despondent even in the midst of his victories. The figure of Napoleon, even at the height of his power, peering

with dissatisfied eyes into an uncertain future, has come down to us in history.

His Will Alone

The only possible way to have all we wish is to wish only what God wishes. His Will alone is sure to be accomplished, and if our will is one with His, we are certain to get what we want. Whatever disappoinment and dissatisfaction are in the hearts of priests come from a lack of perfect union of their wills with the Will of God. "If any man will be at peace, let him lend the energy of his will, wishing what God desires and only what He desires." These are simple words, but they contain truth so profound that they lie at the root of all contentment and especially the contentment of the priest. The wisest even of the pagan philosophers perceived this truth, which should be clearer than day to the priest, that there is no happiness without perfect conformity to God's Will.

It is said that the *Enchiridion* of Epictetus was the one pagan book which early Christians adopted for their own, and anyone who ponders on this remarkable treatise of the stoic philosopher will easily see the reason. In the eyes of Epictetus the true stoic was a man who took all things with an even mind, pleasure and pain, and who despised delights, because he sought in all things only the Will of God. The priest must be more than a stoic. He must embrace sorrows and pain willingly for the love of God. But at least he may not be surpassed by those pagan

philosophers who greatly despised the pleasures of this world and embraced its sufferings, because they saw in this manner of acting a conformity to the great Will of God.

Happiness in Duty Well Done

The next element of priestly happiness on which we should reflect is fidelity to duty, and without this no man can be truly content. In spite of all the multiplication of pleasures and amusements nowadays, most earnest and sincere professional men will assure you that their greatest joy is the joy of work. Was it not Gladstone who said that to work is the greatest satisfaction that life offers? And if this be true of men in general, it is eminently true of the priest. No vocation brings more solid satisfaction in the faithful performance of its duty than the vocation of being "another Christ" and of saving souls. No work is so sure in its results, so sublime in its consequences, as the work of the priest.

Enduring Forever

"Father," said a former classmate one day to a priest, "I am a physician and I help to save many lives. My work is most interesting, but it is doomed to failure, for eventually all my patients must die. Your work is saving not bodies, but souls, and the result of your efforts is success. The souls whom you save will live forever."

In many passages of his eloquent book *De Sacer-*

dotio, St. John Chrysostom expresses his exalted appreciation and love of the sublime work of the priesthood. "If anyone ponders within himself," he says, "how great a thing it is for a man, wrapped in flesh and blood, to come so near to that blessed and immortal Nature, then he will understand with how great and holy an honour the Spirit of God has adorned the priest. For though he dwells on earth, he is intrusted with the things of heaven, and he receives a power which God has given neither to angels nor archangels. . . . For if no one can enter into the kingdom of heaven unless he be born again of water and the Holy Spirit, and if he who does not eat the Flesh of the Lord nor drink His Blood is deprived of eternal life, and if these things can only be done by the holy hands of the priests, who can escape hell or who can gain the crown laid up for him in heaven without their aid?" (*De Sacerdotio,* Lib. III, 5.)

Even from the standpoint of his own personal happiness, it would be a most short-sighted folly in the priest to neglect his work for the sake of recreation or amusement. He will be a hundred times happier devoting himself to the care of souls than he could possibly be in any pleasurable occupation. A certain amount of recreation is necessary for body and mind, but the substantial satisfactions of life are not found in amusements. They come to a man unsought while he is devoting himself with single-hearted energy to doing his priestly duty.

Forgetting Self

Another great element of priestly happiness is the admirable quality of unselfishness, the forgetting of self and selfish interests in order to throw oneself whole-heartedly into the service of the people of Christ. Nothing spoils happiness and mars interior peace much more than the spirit of selfishness and self-seeking. Men who are always outside themselves, thinking of someone else, intent in some good work, can throw off cares and disregard sufferings to an extraordinary degree, for it is only self that suffers and they forget self. But anyone, especially any priest, who becomes unduly centered in himself, intensifies all these miseries.

No Cause for Personal Cares

The priest, of all men, is best able to forget himself. In a certain sense he has no personal cares. He can throw them all on the shoulders of Christ Who is more than willing to bear them for him. Other men have cares because of the families they must support. The priest is like Melchisedech. Other men have careers to carry out, a reputation to guard. The priest's career is marked out for him by Christ and his reputation is in the keeping of Christ.

Other men have personal ambitions to gratify. If the priest is wise, his whole ambition will be summed up in the words "to be another Christ," and such an ambition can never be the cause of disquiet

or care. Other men are vexed by the necessary opposition they meet, by the inevitable sorrows and difficulties their work entails. To the priest who lives united with the will of God these things are only precious opportunities to show his fidelity and patience.

Of all men on earth, taking them as a whole, the happiest are the priests; and of all priests, the happiest are the holiest priests. In proportion then as you become more and more a sincerely holy priest you will approach the happiest situation in life. This brings us to another element in priestly happiness; namely, a deep, sincere piety.

The Nature of Piety

Piety is a childlike love of God. It is more than mere dutifulness because it includes the tender affection of the heart to God. The purest and deepest joys that human nature tastes, not pleasure but joys, come from the love of God. Love is the master passion of human nature and all other passions and inclinations are overwhelmed by it. Whether it be love of self, or love of creatures, or love of God, there is a dominant love in each of us which dedicates us to some cause or person.

Our hearts were created for the love of God and, as St. Augustine says, they will never rest until they rest in Him. So long as we give ourselves to anything created, we are disappointed and unhappy. But the heart that rests in God is happy and at peace.

The more, therefore, that the priest cultivates in his heart a deep and sincere filial love of God, devoting himself with all his being to the service of that kind Father and taking his chief joy and consolation in the service of God, the more he is happy. Since our hearts are made for God, it must be that the love of God is possible to them to a supreme degree. Since the priest, above all other men, is dedicated to the service of God, immense graces must be waiting for him to help him to love God as he should.

To be a deeply pious man, therefore, to have this warm, vivid, earnest, fruitful love of Christ and His heavenly Father, and the Holy Spirit, must be possible to every priest. The one thing that is lacking in us, if we have not such piety, is our own good will and correspondence to the grace of God. We must make sacrifices, we must "mortify" ourselves, that is, "do to death" what is ill-ordered in us, in order that the love of God may have full place in our hearts. But the reward of this sacrifice is the joy of true piety. A priest who is not pious will never be a happy man.

Not Feelings But Will

We have to remind ourselves, again and again, that piety is not in the feelings, but in the will. It will often overflow into the feelings, through the mercy of God, and there are some persons to whom piety is almost always a pleasure. But a man's feelings may be dry as a stone and his heart may be deeply pious and filled with inward love. It is told

of Father Gignac, who lived almost in our own time, that he was a man of splendid fidelity to his priestly duties and to a life of devotion. Once one of his penitents complained to him that for some time he had experienced no sensible devotion or consolation.

"My child," answered Father Gignac, "I will tell you for your encouragement that for many years I have felt no sensible consolation whatever. I have continued to practice all my religious duties, to say Mass, to pray, but without inward devotion." Here was a pious man whose piety was proof even against the absence of feeling and consolation. He was a happy man because he was contented to go on loving God and doing His holy Will, in His service, even without the sensible rewards of God's consolations. This way lies priestly happiness.

Devotions and Piety

Concerning the devotions of the priest, which are so great an element in the happiness of his life, we shall speak afterwards. Suffice it to say now that the true and approved devotions of the Church are a great aid to piety and a great source of inward consolation and strength, and that the priest, to be happy, should make a great point of practicing some devotions.

Dealing With Others

Every priest will recognize that the points on which we have been dwelling are essential elements

in priestly happiness. But there are some other lesser ingredients, so to say, in the happiness of the priest to which it will be well to give due attention. One of these is the friendliness, the kindliness and tact with which he knows how to deal with other people. By his very vocation an *Alter Christus* must treat with every variety of human character. He must know how to repress the exuberant, to console the sorrowful, to hearten the disheartened, to meet animosity and antagonism. He must be all things to all men. In our contacts with others, tact, friendliness, kindliness are like oil on troubled waters.

To change the metaphor, they are like the lubricant which makes even great machines run smoothly and quietly. A man who has not the oil of human kindness, of tact and gentleness, will find life a very rough and nerve-racking affair. While the gentle man, who is a true "gentleman," can persuade and mollify, can win cooperation and overcome resistance, the tactless, rough, overbearing, inconsiderate man has his own sins visited upon his head.

One cannot give others pain without suffering pain in return, and how many a priest has had his happiness ruined and his interior peace disturbed in retribution for his own inconsiderateness and lack of tact in dealing with others. Here, again, a word to the wise is sufficient. Anyone can bring forth from his own experience, instances and examples of what we have been saying enough to fill a volume.

Natural Virtues Necessary

Finally, the happiness of the priest requires the firm foundation of a strong natural character. We have already dwelt on the four foundation stones of natural character—prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude.

The possession of all these virtues is necessary for happiness. Prudence keeps a man from pitfalls which would destroy his happiness. It restrains him from errors of judgment, it teaches him to govern all his actions by right reason and the reasonable man is the happy man. Imprudent men, whether they are too rash or overcautious, are always in trouble and never at peace. We must remember in this connection that an excess of prudence which degenerates into timidity is just as hostile to true happiness as the rashness which runs headlong into trouble.

The Happiness of Justice and Fortitude

Justice is likewise a virtue essential to happiness because the unjust man is continually in trouble, and even when he is saved outwardly from the consequences of his injustice, still his conscience will trouble him and keep him from being at peace. Since the priest has so many solemn duties and grave obligations, he, more than other men, has need of this virtue of justice to keep him happy.

Though temperance and fortitude are necessary for happiness to any man, they are especially needful to us. Intemperance in any form, any excess, whether

in food or drink, in amusements or in conversation, troubles the mind and afflicts the soul. Intemperance, like injustice and imprudence, brings its own retribution, swiftly following on the heels of the act.

As to fortitude, the stoics were right, so far as their light went, in making this an absolute requisite for contentment. Peace in this world must lie in bearing tribulations patiently, not in possessing full satisfaction. Our happiness in heaven will be pure and unalloyed by sorrow. But the most wretched man can obtain happiness in this world by patiently bearing the evils that God allows to come upon him. No need to dwell longer on this subject. The more we school ourselves to true fortitude, motived by the love of God and of Christ, the more we shall be contented. The priest who desires to be an *Alter Christus* in union with Christ in suffering as well as in labouring with Him, has found a deep source of happiness.

We are too prone to look on the teachings of ascetic writers as impractical and unreal, when they tell us that a love of suffering is possible to us, and brings the sincerest contentment. To human nature this is a hard saying, but the more we love Jesus Christ the more we will be willing to suffer with Him. A true priest, full of the spirit of Christ, would never desire a life of ease, untroubled and tranquil. He wishes to prove his love for Christ and to become more like his Divine Master by being at the same time a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, a man of action and zealous striving, and yet full of

interior peace, of the love of God and of tranquil conformity to His will.

The Priest's Model

The world, the flesh, and the devil may tell us otherwise; our own nature may rebel against the discipline put upon it; the things of this world may seem pleasant, brief as they are; yet we have to turn our faces away from all these natural allurements and look intently upon the Crucifix, seeing there the Model of the true priest. The more we appreciate the benefits of suffering, the more we love to suffer for the sake of Christ, the more willing we are to feel the sting of pain and the smart of tribulation to be like our Master, the more essentially happy we shall be.

"The disciple is not greater than his Master," and this saying of Christ remains true for all ages of the world. "If any man will be My disciple, let him take up his cross daily and follow Me." In the patient, courageous following of our crucified Lord, we priests are to find, day by day, the purest, most genuine happiness which the heart of man can achieve.

XIII. THE PRIEST'S PRAYER

IF any man, if any priest, might have dispensed himself from special exercises of prayer, and from the observance of special times to pray, that man and that priest was Christ our Lord. His whole existence was a prayer. Even while He dwelt upon earth, His sacred humanity, had the beatific vision, and the intercourse of His Heart and Soul with God the Father was perfect and serene, at every moment. Why should He have needed to give any special time to prayer, when the perpetual incense of His love, His adoration, His thankfulness and supplication, rose at every moment to the throne of God? Besides, His least act had an endless efficacy as prayer, because He was the eternal Son of God, Who had assumed a human nature. All His human actions were acts of a divine Person, and therefore endlessly meritorious in the sight of His Father in Heaven.

Christ's Prayer

Yet, it is our Lord Who has given to His priests the most sublime and insistent example of frequent and perfect prayer. Throughout His hidden life, we are left to infer how constant was the prayer of Christ, from what we know of His prayer during His public mission. If, during the years of His journeys and His teaching, He so often retired to the desert or to the Garden of Olives to pray, how many must have

been His times for prayer in the quiet seclusion of Nazareth, when His simple household duties left Him so many opportunities. We can imagine, therefore, how often He must have recited, with glowing heart, those sublime prayers of the psalms of David, which the priest repeats each day in his holy Office. Perhaps He frequently repeated also with His Blessed Mother and St. Joseph those mighty prayer-poems, which run the whole gamut of the aspirations of the heart of man toward God. Thus, we priests, when we read each day the psalms of our sacred office, are saying over again prayers most dear to the Heart and the lips of Christ.

Christ's Public Life

But even during the time of His public life, we see, from the accounts of the Evangelists, how frequently Christ turned aside from His daily toils, to pray. At the very beginning of His going forth to the trials and the labours of His public life, He was led into the desert by the Holy Spirit, and spent forty days in fasting and prayer. These forty days are, we know, the inspiration of the Church in setting aside forty days of Lenten prayer and penance, and in establishing priestly retreats, and especially the retreat which precedes ordination. For if the All-Perfect and the All-Holy, Who ran His course like a giant, and had within Himself the power of the Deity, thus prayed during forty days, much more should we, who with so little strength or goodness of

our own, are called to run in His footsteps and to be His ambassadors, give due time to prayer.

Christ's Teachings on Prayer

During His public life, and especially in the evening, after a weary and trying day, Christ often spent long hours of the night in prayer. He gave careful instructions to His Apostles and disciples as to how they should pray. He offered them that most sublime assurance of the efficacy of prayer contained in the seventh chapter of St. Matthew, in which it is made clear that through right and persevering prayer a man can borrow the omnipotence of God. He invited His Apostles and disciples to follow Him into the desert, to rest, and, we can easily infer, to pray.

Happily for us He answered the petition of His followers that He should teach them how to pray, by opening His own Heart and recited for them the Our Father. This is indeed a comprehensive prayer, from which we can learn the great petitions, for the granting of which Christ's Heart pleaded oftenest with His Father in heaven. *"Sola est oratio quae Deum vincit,"* says Tertullian, in his treatise *De Oratione,* echoing the faith of the early Christians in prayer, which, as they learned from Christ Himself, alone can win victories even over the Most High.

For Priests in Particular

All this was for the good of all His followers, but surely it was for the special instruction of His priests,

who have to continue His mission, to follow His example most closely, and, therefore, to become and to remain men of prayer. It behooves each of us, therefore, to call himself to account from time to time concerning the accomplishment of our duty of prayer, and how well or ill we employ this necessary means, not only to secure our own salvation and goodness, but to help our neighbour and the Church. Here there is no question of sentiment nor of feeling, nor of the pious emotions. To pray rightly and well is, for the priest, a man's work, a work that tries the spirit and tests the will, one of the most difficult, as it is one of the most important, of his duties as a priest.

A Most Important Distinction

We are all inclined here again to fall into the mistake referred to before in another connection, of confusing pious feelings with piety, and the consolation of prayer with prayer itself. A natural liking for, and a sensible devotion to prayer, though they do often go with proficiency in that holy exercise, are by no means essential to it. The most efficacious prayer must often be that which is wrung from a dry heart by pure earnestness of the will, from a sense of duty, and for the sake of God, but without any natural consolation. We show all the more love for God and all the more substantial devotion when we continue to pray well without the sweetness and encouragement which comes from experiencing feelings of piety as we pray.

When Prayer Is Easy

There are some seasons when prayer is easy, when we can speak to God familiarly, and without effort. Times of great sorrow, or anxiety, or distress, when human help and consolation fail, often loosen the springs of devotion and enable us to pray eloquently with the heart, if not with the lips. But such seasons of sensible devotion are with many persons very rare. Prayer is usually for them, a real work; and since sloth is a fundamental inclination of our nature, it is spiritual sloth which keeps them from making the effort to pray well.

The Difficulty of Prayer

Everyone experiences, at times, this difficulty of prayer. Even St. Teresa of Avila, great mystic and contemplative as she was, and adept in the art of prayer, used sometimes, so the story goes, to shake the hour glass with which she was accustomed to measure off her meditations. She answers the question, "Why is it so hard to be friends with God, to converse with Him in prayer?" by replying that it is because His nature is so different from ours. He is a pure spirit, and, therefore, unheard and unseen, unattainable by our senses, while we are a spirit substantially joined to matter, and depending on matter for our direct knowledge of things outside of us. Our converse with God is, therefore, difficult to our nature.

It requires the exercise of faith to be aware of

the presence of God, of humility to acknowledge His supreme dominion over us, of hope confidently to trust in His goodness. All these things demand effort, and are hard to our human nature, under ordinary circumstances. Therefore, even good priests sometimes too easily dispense themselves from prayer. They take advantage of little excuses for not praying. They make a pretext of duties which could be easily postponed, to exempt themselves from exercises of prayer, which should not be postponed. The priest, being human, is very likely to have this inclination, and it requires a manly will to overcome it.

The practice of what, after St. Augustine, are called ejaculatory prayers, ought to commend itself specially to priests. No matter how busy one may be, the work in hand becomes a prayer if it is sprinkled, so to say, with these fiery arrows of brief but fervent prayer, these darts of thought and love directed on high. The practice of such prayers is very ancient in the Church. St. Augustine, in his *Ep. CXXX, 20,* tells us that the monks of Egypt used to pray indeed very often but with most brief and fervent ejaculations, so that the alert attention which is so necessary for earnest prayer might not be dulled and lessened by longer delays.

The *Raccolta* gives a rich variety of such prayers, many of them highly indulgenced. The frequent inward prayer: "My God, I love Thee!" often sent up from the priestly heart in the course of the day, will sanctify the flying hours.

The Divine Office

The most important prayer which priests have to offer is, of course, safeguarded from absolute neglect by the solemn obligation imposed by the Church. The Divine Office is an admirable structure, built up by the devotion of ages, whose great foundations sink deep into the past, but whose details of embellishment and adornment are forever receiving new beauties from each passing generation. It reminds one of those venerable Gothic cathedrals one sees in European lands, whose origin is lost in the midst of antiquity, whose holy interiors are incrusted with rich and various works of art, and whose naves echo every day, to the divine praises, always ancient and always new.

From the days of the Apostles, who kept the Jewish custom of prayer at set hours of the day and the night, the Christian Office has continued to grow and develop in concord with the Eucharistic ceremonies, until now it forms a most various and beautiful succession of reflections, memories, prayers, aspirations, canticles—of all the elements that enter into fervent human prayer. It is, in great part, the result of the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, being composed so largely of extracts from the Old and the New Testaments. It has been slowly moulded into its present form, from the days of the early Christians to our own, through decrees of Popes and councils, the solicitude of holy men, and the efforts of scholars. It is sweet with memories of the saints, fragrant with heroic traditions.

When the priest takes his breviary into his hands, and begins the Divine Office, his small, individual prayer swells out into the vast official prayer of Mother Church, which storms heaven with mighty efficacy and moves the Heart of God for the salvation of souls. With every word he utters, he discharges the priestly office of official mediator between God and His people. When he says the Psalms, his prayer is united to the unending chorus of divine praise that these words have carried up to heaven from earth, day by day, through the long centuries, since the inspired King of Israel first uttered his moving psalms, or since those other writers of psalms, who rounded out his inspired strains, first conceived under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, their rhythmic prayers.

Digne, Attente, Devote

These thoughts ought to be an inspiration to the priest to say the office each day *"Digne, attente, et devote"* in the words of the prayer that precedes the office. Each of these three words would repay much pondering, and could form the subject of fruitful resolutions. The office is to be said "worthily," "attentively," and "devoutly." To pray in the name of the whole Church, to utter a prayer so sacred and important that the omission of so much as one of the small hours, would be seriously wrong, such praying certainly deserves the effort to do it worthily, and with due attention, and with a devout heart.

Many beautiful things have been said concerning the Sacred Office, and each priest should make for himself many reflections on this topic, which is so important to his spiritual life. He employs usually about an hour each day in saying the Holy Office, which means that about one waking hour out of every sixteen is entirely dedicated to this exercise. Counting a man's working hours as ten in a day, the priest spends one tenth of his active life in the priesthood reciting his breviary. What the Church thinks of the relative importance of this task may be seen from the fact that this duty of the priest is imposed under pain of mortal sin.

The Priest's Devotion

Besides this official prayer, the priest has need to cultivate in his own heart those great devotions of the Church which it is his duty to encourage among the faithful. The devotions to the Blessed Sacrament and to the Blessed Virgin lead the list of those which the priest should cherish, His personal needs and inclinations will move him to take up other devotions also that have a special appeal to him. To use the old, homely comparison, the priest in this matter of devotion should not be like a conduit, which is constantly conveying refreshment to others, but remains unhelped by the waters that flow through it, but rather he should be like a living fountain or well-spring, full of the pleasant floods of devotion, and giving of his abundance to other souls.

The saying of the beads, the making of the Way of the Cross, which requires but a few minutes and recalls so vividly the memory of the sufferings of the Saviour, these ought to find part in every priest's day. So should the frequent uttering of those ejaculatory prayers which help so much to keep the mind on God.

Mental Prayers

The subject of mental prayer all too often seems to present an aspect of difficulty to the active, busy priest, which it should not have. Fundamentally, as we all know, the difference between mental prayer and vocal prayer is that the latter expression indicates that some outward action, usually the act of speech, accompanies the inward action of the mind and heart, while the former term, mental prayer, denotes the exercise of the memory, intelligence, and will to think of God or of holy things, to reflect on them, and to make acts of faith, hope, love, adoration, thanksgiving, supplication, reparation, and so on.

A certain degree of mental prayer, therefore, accompanies all worth-while vocal prayer, and on the other hand, since the mind and the heart of a good priest are often raised to God during the hours of the day, he is really making mental prayer very frequently when he himself does not advert to the fact. One of the most precious habits a priest can form is the habit of intimate conversation with God. By this conversation we mean the frequent and habitual remembrance of God's presence, and of His power and love,

and the custom of referring everything to Him, of confiding to Him every joy and sorrow, and of keeping up, so to say, a frequent mental intercourse with Him through the recollections of the mind and the aspirations of the heart. Every good priest has something of this gift of habitual converse with God, but it may be almost indefinitely perfected by deliberate and systematic effort, and there are few achievements more precious to the priest, both from the standpoint of his personal goodness and of his helpfulness to others.

Learning the Art of Converse With God

Among the means of increasing and deepening this custom are, without question, the practice of a daily meditation, and of frequent spiritual reading and examination of conscience. Each one of these exercises has its own peculiar efficacy in uniting the soul with God and making habitual conversation with God more easy and effective.

The tyranny of trifles, the constant preoccupation with little details of work, the routine of daily life, all these tend to depress the spirit, to envelop the soul in a cloud of distractions. As a dust cloud obscures the sun, these distractions shade the soul from the light of God's presence. Any spiritual exercise, like good reading, meditation, examination of conscience, refreshes the mind and helps to bring it back to the eternal verities. It thus enables the soul to remember God more easily and to speak to Him more efficaciously.

The Apostleship of Prayer ought also be a great help to the priest in praying well and in making life a constant prayer. While he recommends to his people to make and renew the morning offering, he will do it himself, and the remembrance that all his thoughts and words and actions are offered in union with those of Christ will help him to lift his mind frequently to God and often to renew that oblation. For the priest, of all men, the Apostleship of Prayer has a singular significance. The priest shares most in that Apostleship because he is essentially "another Christ," consecrated to Christ by the priestly character, and standing daily at the altar to offer up with Christ that most characteristic of all Christly actions, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

The Prayer of the Mass

The offering up of the Mass is both a prayer and an aid to prayer of exhaustless efficacy. Like the breviary, the ceremonies of the Mass are full of ancient sweetness, the stored up fragrance of the saintly prayers of all past generations. At the consecration of the Mass, the priest puts off his own person and speaks with the very lips of Christ, praying in intimate union with the Son of God, a union unmatched at any other time, or by any other class of persons. As the Mass is the supreme prayer, so, also, its influence extends to all other prayers, and to say Mass excellently requires and insures a prayerful spirit during all the rest of the day.

For what intentions should the priest pray? Can we do better than to take the prayer of the Heart of Christ, the Our Father, in which He discloses the objects of His own perfect prayer, and make them ours, using these sublime intentions to stir devotion, fervour, and Christlike zeal in our own hearts? He prayed, first that the name of His heavenly Father should be glorified. Next, He prayed for the coming of God's Kingdom, for the doing of God's will on earth as it is done in heaven.

Then come petitions for the daily help of God's providence to meet the daily needs of body and soul. Then, for forgiveness of sins and for deliverance from temptation. These are the intentions most suitable for the priestly heart, most Christlike and, therefore, most priestlike.

One is loath to leave a subject so important, so rich in profitable thoughts. But this topic of priestly prayer enters into many other subjects which we shall have to discuss, and so we shall have occasion to speak of other aspects thereof later on. Since the gift of prayer comes in answer to prayer, every priest should surely include in his Mass and his other devotions an earnest intention to plead with God for this gift for himself, and for all priests throughout the world. The fervour of this intention will be the measure of our appreciation of the grace of prayer.

XIV. THE PRIEST'S MEDITATION

EVERY priest during his seminary days has been impressed with the importance of mental prayer and encouraged to make a daily meditation. Yet this word "meditation" is likely to have no very attractive sound. We ought to examine and even scrutinize our ideas on such subjects as priestly meditation and see whether they are quite accurate and truthful and accord with reality.

Sometimes a word like meditation is unconsciously misunderstood or acquires a connotation which it really should not have. Does the word "meditation" bring to our mind a rather stiff, difficult, and formal procedure? Does it recall to us efforts at following out another's thought in a formal way, efforts which are accompanied with a good deal of drowsiness? If so, such an idea may explain the difficulty of keeping up the practice of meditation.

The Simplicity of Meditation

In point of fact, the word ought not to bring with it any such impressions. Reduced to its true substance, meditation is the intent employing of the mind on spiritual things and the occupying of the will with holy desires and resolves. Whoever dwells thoughtfully and intently on holy thoughts and recollections and by means of these stirs up his will honestly to wish for holy things and sincerely to resolve to strive

after them, meditates and meditates fruitfully also, even though he should not employ any formal method of meditation, nor adopt any set plan in his thoughts.

The definition of "meditation" offered us by the dictionary, declares that it is "a private, religious or devotional exercise, consisting in a continuous application of the mind to the consideration of some religious or moral truth, or the like, in order to promote personal holiness and love of God." This definition is quite neatly framed. Meditation is the continuous application of the mind and, therefore, it is distinguished from those passing elevations of the soul to God which occur in the midst of a busy day when the priest has not the time to stop and dwell on them, but breathes a prayer and then passes on to the details of his work. Meditation, to be worthy of the name, requires that a man give a definite time to the deliberate exercise of his memory and intelligence, dwelling on a religious truth and to the eliciting of acts of the will suggested by this pondering.

How Long to Meditate

The answer to the question, how long a priest should give each day to this exercise of mental prayer, must depend somewhat on his circumstances and his aptitude for prayer. Half an hour is a very reasonable minimum, one would think, considering the extreme importance of the work.

No man is so busy that he cannot with good will give half an hour to thinking over those truths on

which his whole life is based and to which he has consecrated his entire being. Granted that he will give this time to the "continuous application of his mind to religious truths," then he may be said truly to practice meditation, whether he uses a regular meditation book or adopts one of the other methods, which we shall describe.

To look on meditation as a very cut-and-dried affair, which may be carried on only in accordance with set rules and is not successful unless it is very formal and precise, is to defeat the purpose of meditation. This purpose is to exercise the mind and the heart, the one in realizing more clearly and deeply the truths on which we ponder and the other in making honest and practical resolves in accord with these reflections.

Why We Should Meditate

If we ask ourself, "why should a priest make a daily meditation?" the answer is quite obvious. A meditation is an exercise in realization and if there is one thing we need more than another, it is to realize the truths which we already know so well and believe so firmly. A great deal of the inconsistency of human nature, the sad contrast between belief and practice, is due to a lack of realization. In the midst of distracted lives, with dozens of interests calling on our attention, our limited faculties become too much absorbed with present material things. Meditation is the definite effort to fan the inward flames of realization and with this realization comes inevitably a new

fervour in our will, greater desires of holiness, stronger resolutions to perform our duties faithfully.

How much a little quiet reflection helps to clarify difficulties in our work, to find the right ways of action, to notice past mistakes and avoid future ones. What is true of our work with the people is true also of our spiritual life.

A period of quiet thought each day concerning the great truths of faith, a deliberate effort to orient our mind and heart anew, is of inestimable value in keeping us consistent and faithful. The old saying of the prophet that "with desolation the world is made desolate, because no one taketh thought in his heart," is as true today as it ever was. Indeed, it is truer, or at least more practical, for us of this present time, because distractions were never so multiplied, activities never so insistent as they are today.

The Whirlwind of Distractions

What with the high pressure of modern life and the multiplication of interests, even a priest may live for days in a perfect whirl of distraction unless he pulls himself up to think and pray during his quiet time of meditation. Add to this, that the very effort made to meditate is in itself a true service to Almighty God and a very great service, considering the obstacles which exist to meditation. It is hard to conceive how a priest who makes a daily meditation faithfully and well can fail to be in every other respect also fervent and edifying. Hence, the effort required to make a

daily meditation, though it may be great, is more than repaid by the benefits which ensue.

The main purpose of meditation must always be kept in mind, to stir up the will to acts of love of God and sorrow for sin and to new resolves of greater fidelity and fervour in God's service. It is these acts of the will which are the objective of our meditation. If, therefore, we find ourselves already disposed to make such acts of the love of God, of sorrow for sin, of resolutions of greater fidelity, then we may well dwell on these acts during the whole time of meditation. But if our will is dull and inert, then we have to blow up the inward fires of love and good resolve by thinking of motives, by recalling the mysteries of faith, by using our memory and intelligence to offer the will incentives to action.

The Greatest Obstacles

If we ask ourselves what are the greatest obstacles to fruitful meditation, we must admit that mental sloth and distraction hold the foremost place. This is not a very thoughtful age, and though the priest is much more trained in serious reflection than other men, still even he finds it hard to concentrate his mind on weighty themes. A good meditation requires the exclusion of distracting thoughts and we live in one of the most distracted ages of the world. This is a restless time, and all who live partake in the spirit of restlessness. To give up all other occupations, to concentrate one's mind on holy thoughts, to spend a time

of each day in intense inward activity to the exclusion of outward distractions, all this demands no slight exercise of diligence and goes directly against our natural sloth.

The effective means of overcoming this natural inertia, this disinclination to serious thought, and this prevalent distraction of mind, is earnest prayer accompanied by strong effort of the will. We ought to beseech God to give us the spirit of prayer, for it is a truism in the spiritual life that unless we do meditate, in one way or the other, either formally or informally, we shall inevitably fail to do our duty to God and to our neighbour. We should encourage ourselves by the thought that prayer is our strongest and surest weapon, our spiritual sword and shield. Such was the conviction of the early Christians. Tertullian, that voice of Christian antiquity, whose sad end does not take away the worth of his earlier writing, thus speaks of prayer: "It lessens guilt, it beats off temptations, it extinguishes persecutions, it consoles the fearful, it delights the great of soul, it leads travelers safely, it lessens floods, it terrifies robbers, it helps the poor, it rules kings, it lifts up the fallen, it holds up those who are falling, it keeps the standing upright. Prayer is the wall of faith, it affords us arms and darts against wicked men who watch us from all sides. Thus, let us never go unarmed, by night and by day let us remember to pray. *"Liber de Oratione, Caput Ultimum."*

Our Personal Aptitudes

When we come to reflect on the methods to be used in meditation, we should emphasize the wisdom of adapting our way of meditating to our personal aptitudes. Many persons are helped by a very definite and formal method such as is found in the standard books of meditation, and for them it is wise to use such a book regularly. Others find that a set method palls on them after a time and they should be recommended to adopt a less formal way of mental prayer. Generally speaking, it is helpful in the beginning to use a definite method and a meditation book. After a person has become more accustomed to mental prayer, the exercise of his will and mind will become more spontaneous, he will have acquired the art of meditation.

Different Ways to Meditate

Some persons find it very helpful to begin their meditation by reading over, very slowly, passages from some congenial spiritual book or from the Scriptures, and dwelling on each passage as long as they find any fruit therefrom of pious thoughts and holy resolutions. The words of our Lord in the New Testament and the charming *Imitation of Christ* lend themselves very well to this way of thought and prayer. Reading, in this case, is only a means to stir the mind and the will to meditate. It should not be consecutive reading, but merely the inward uttering of sentence after sentence, with long pauses between which are given over to reflection and acts of the will.

This same method may, of course, be used with formal prayer and there are two ways of doing this suggested by St. Ignatius in his *Book of Spiritual Exercises*. One is, by repeating the prayer, phrase after phrase, and dwelling as long on the meaning of each phrase as we find savour and profit therein. The other, reciting the phrases of the prayer, with a long breath between each phrase, and quietly pondering during these intervals on the meaning of what has just been said. So, too, we may sometimes spend the time of meditation in reflecting on each of the Ten Commandments and their application to ourselves, or on the various duties which we have to exercise, or the manner in which we have to fulfill them, or in dwelling on our ministry to the people, calling ourselves to account as though we were in the presence of God's judgment, and determining for what we have reason to be thankful and satisfied and what still remains to be done toward correction and improvement.

During the Day

Here we may mention that some priests who find it difficult to make a formal meditation supply this lack in some degree by their thoughts and aspirations during the day. The essential requirement is that we should from time to time lift up our minds and hearts to God and refresh our souls with holy thoughts and good resolves. It is not absolutely necessary for the spiritual life that this exercise of the mind and will be confined to a certain definite half hour, provided that

during the day we do often take the breaths of pure air. The half hour of meditation may be compared to the half hour of regular systematic exercise which many men find necessary nowadays, to counteract their sedentary way of existence. The man whose occupation is very active feels no need of this physical exercise. He gets enough during his daily work.

Yet, even the holy men of old, the monks of the desert, the cenobites and hermits, felt the need of a set time for prayer although they did not employ perhaps any very definite method of meditation. Yet, oftentimes during the day their minds and hearts were lifted to God. One reason why systematic meditation has come into such general practice at the present time is that the distractions and worldliness of the day so exclude the thought of God from the heart that it is necessary for us to take regular spiritual exercise, at a definite time, just as it is necessary for us to go out for a walk each day, or to take calisthenics.

Various Methods of Mental Prayer

There is hardly space in these pages for a description of the methods of meditation which are so blessed by the Church and have been so fruitful in many Souls. In the article in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* on "Prayer" the priest will find outlined the method of St. Ignatius and the method recommended to the students of Sulpician seminaries. The standard books of meditation offer abundant material for the preparation of meditation. Every priest has certain

favourite books from which he can always derive some spiritual fervour and sweetness. The spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius, with the directory and commentaries thereon, are now available in English. Hence, any priest may easily find abundant material for his meditation.

It is very wise to insist with oneself on devoting a certain definite time of the day to this exercise; and to observe faithfully one's time of meditation is a test of will power of no little value. A very good means of encouraging ourselves to fidelity to the time of meditation, is to impose a little voluntary penance whenever this time has been shortened or neglected. If, for example, you would forego reading the daily newspaper until your time of meditation had been completed, this would be an indubitable aid to fidelity. We shall do well to make use of such little artifices, for we should never forget that, though priests, we are yet extremely human, and human nature must be taken and ruled according to its own laws.

Blessings for Others

This habit of daily meditation, though it is primarily intended for the spiritual benefit of the priest himself, confers an immense blessing on everyone with whom he has to deal. Meditation deepens and enriches the priestly mind, strengthens faith, supplies the priest with vivid illustrations, with holy motives, not only for his own sanctification, but for the help of everyone with whom he comes in contact. We can

never sufficiently emphasize the great truth that what the priest *is,* even more than what he *does,* helps and influences his flock. No one can ever do effectively the work of Christ, save insofar as he himself is Christlike. Now, meditation such as we have been describing, is continually shaping the mind and the heart of the priest to a greater resemblance to Christ.

It is Christ's thoughts that are in the mind of the priest during his meditation. The heart of the priest while he meditates, beats in unison with the Heart of Christ, in love of God, sorrow for and hatred of sin, great desires, fervent aspirations, holy resolves. At no time is the priest more Christlike, more "another Christ," than when he is in the midst of fervent meditation. While the priest administers the sacraments, even while he offers up the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, he represents Christ, indeed exteriorly, but interiorly he may be very different from his Master. But when his mind is full of holy thoughts deliberately dwelt upon and pondered, when his heart is aflame with divine love, then the priest is most like to Jesus Christ.

The life of our Lord on earth was, we cannot doubt it, a continual exercise of mental prayer. His thoughts were forever dwelling on the great truths of faith, on the being of His Divine Father, on the welfare of His Church, on all those topics which form the matter of the priest's meditation. His sacred Heart was constantly employed in acts of fervent zeal, of the love of God and of His neighbour for the sake of God. When, therefore, and insofar as you make each day a

fervent meditation, you are growing daily and daily more like to Christ, more truly "another Christ," in your mind and in your heart.

XV. THE PRIEST'S SPIRITUAL READING

WE have all of us two selves. One self is the ambassador of Christ, the "other Christ," the official messenger of Jesus, who speaks His words, administers His sacraments and preaches in His name to the people. This is our public self, our outward self, and the more Christlike we are in this public ministry, the more do we fulfill the true character of an ambassador of the Saviour of mankind. But beneath the sacerdotal robes, under the outward seeming, there is another self, a human being, a son of Adam, who inherits all the possibilities of heroism and of defeat of Adam's children. This other self is our own human nature. A human heart beats beneath the cassock, and a human mind pursues its uninterrupted life of thought beneath the sacerdotal biretta.

The Support of Our Ministry

This real self of ours is, in truth, the support and the substructure of our life of Christlike ministry. Just as grace depends upon nature, and we could not be raised to the supernatural order unless we had a natural existence, so, in a way, our priestly life depends on our personal life and our sacerdotal self. We can never be truly Christlike unless we have a solid foundation of individual piety. The old proverb declares that *"Primum est vivere deinde philosophari,"* we might paraphrase thus: *"Primum esse bonum*

hominem, deinde bonum sacerdotem." Hence, our ambition to be good ambassadors of Christ, good "other Christs," must begin with the ambition to be excellent men.

Another old motto assures us that no one ever gives what he does not possess. It follows then, that the means of grace and perservance which we earnestly recommend to others are to be used first and foremost by ourselves. We have spoken of the priest's prayer and it is even more important for him to be a man of prayer himself than to be able to encourage prayer in others. So, also, the right use of the sacraments is even more important to the priest than it is to his flock, because he, in fact, is more in need of grace than they, having a higher mission, a more difficult task, and far more exalted obligations.

Keeping Mentally Fit

Here we reach the subject on which we should like especially to dwell for the present. Spiritual reading is no less necessary, is, indeed, much more necessary for the priest than for his people, and if we urge our flock thus often to feed their minds with holy and pure thoughts, we ourselves should be foremost in acting on this good advice. Not very much argument ought to be necessary to prove this point. That we all need more and more instruction, more and more spiritual stimulus, goes without saying. It is said of all professional men that their education must never cease, for they have forever to be adding to their knowledge, keeping up with modern developments,

deepening and perfecting their professional education.

This is true of the priest, eminently true, because his work deals with the most precious interest of men —their soul's salvation—because the more learning he possesses, the better he will do his work. Then too, because the field before him of sacred theology and moral theology, of pastoral direction and organization, of apologetics, of all the many subjects on which priests must be informed is indefinitely great in its scope and in its possibilities. No matter how learned a priest may be, he will always be improved by further reading and study. He need never have a moment unoccupied, which he can give to good books.

Keeping Spiritually Fit

But from another standpoint, good reading is of immense importance to the priest. He is obliged to read spiritual books not only for the direct benefit of others, but also for his own soul. Having a human nature like the rest of men, he is dragged down by the flesh and lifted up by the spirit, and he experiences in himself that war of which St. Paul wrote so feelingly, between the inward law of holiness and the downward pull of the world and the flesh.

He needs therefore, let us repeat, to be strengthened like other men with good motives, fortified with holy thoughts, encouraged by the good examples preserved for us in holy books. Whatever arguments the priest uses to encourage the laity to read good books for their

soul's sake, he may use to himself, and more eminently. Just as the father of a large family has a double duty to preserve his health and strength, first that he may serve God himself and, second, that he may support his family so that they may serve God also, so the priest has, one may say, a double duty to be holy, first for his own soul's sake and second that he may sustain and increase the holiness of his people.

Again the Breviary

Who can doubt that one of the most powerful and efficacious means of becoming and remaining holy is to be found in the right sort of spiritual reading. One may say that the priest has already enough spiritual reading in the Divine Office. It is true that we find in this holy book a marvelous selection of spiritual reading. The psalms of David are the strong meat and the sweet honey of spiritual sustenance, and they abound in the breviary, but they are not so easy of digestion that they can be taken in and assimilated by swift and unreflective reading.

The priest would do well to study the psalms outside of the time of office, to familiarize himself with their more human and spiritual significance. Then the reading of the psalms of the breviary would be a succession of bright flashes of spiritual thought, of warm impulses to prayer, of acts of gratitude, praise, jubilation, adoration, atonement, confidence, supplication, for all these things recur like the refrain of sweet music throughout the harmonious songs of the psalms.

It was so that the reading of the psalms thrilled the soul of St. Augustine of Hippo, when, after his conversion, he read them at Cassiacum with his mother, St. Monica, and his faithful friends. He tells of his emotions in his *Confessions*. As he read the psalms, wonder filled his soul. Enthusiasm and joy swept through his heart at the words of David. The penitential sentiments awakened in his heart awe, and sorrow for his sins. A holy confidence in the mercy of God possessed him, as he pondered on the trust in God's forgiveness expressed by the psalmist. These psalms are the very flesh and substance of our breviary, and they have lost none of their unction and power since the days of the holy Father of the Church.

Then, too, the lives of the saints are offered to us in brief and concentrated form in the holy office. Each day some hero of Christ or some great and sublime mystery is presented to us for veneration and imitation. Rightly used, the breviary may serve as a guide for the whole life of the priest, suggesting as it does, day by day, special virtues to be practiced, special heroes or heroines to be imitated, mysteries to be pondered. But in order that the breviary may thus be truly spiritual reading, it must be said indeed *digne, attente, devote,* and with a due dwelling on the meaning of its sublime passages. After the Mass, the saying of the breviary ought to be considered the most important act of the priest's day.

Personal Spiritual Reading

The importance of feeding one's mind and heart with good thoughts and holy motives ought to persuade the priest to devote, out of his busy day, some moments at least to other spiritual reading than that which is contained in the breviary. The Holy Office is more directly intended as a prayer than as a spiritual reading. It is the great official homage of the Church to God. Many priests say it too rapidly to savour its meaning. For others, the Latin tongue offers difficulty in garnering the sense. Hence, of his own accord, every priest ought to make some personal spiritual reading day by day, and to consider this not the least important of the things he can do for his own inward life.

Considering himself as a man the priest will deal with himself in a human way, allowing for his own weakness and weariness. Therefore, in this matter of spiritual reading he will make it easy, so to say, for himself to read good books by adopting the very practical principle of good books at his elbow. We have stressed this principle to the people with weariless reiteration, that the way to read good books is to have good books at hand, an abundance of attractive books, interesting books, just at the place and the time where we shall have a moment to read them. We may depend upon it that the books which will be read are the books convenient to the hand at the right moment.

The Line of Least Resistance

Human nature so instinctively seeks the line of least resistance that, when we have a few moments for good reading, we shall be ten times more inclined to pick up a book that is on the table before us, than to go out and visit the library or the bookstore and get a book, or even to go and open the bookcase and pick out a volume. It is quite extraordinary how far this principle of least resistance goes. You may keep books in your bookcase for years and no one will pay the least attention to them. No one will trouble himself even to turn the key and take out a book, much less ask for the key. But take one book from your shelves and put it on the table and then notice how many who come into the room glance at it and open the pages, if it is an attractive book.

Have Plenty of Good Books at Hand

Now, you are moved by the same impulses as the rest of men. If you, yourself, have attractive, interesting books on your table or desk, where you can get them with no more exertion than the reaching out of your hand, you will be far more likely to read them than if you had to go even to the least trouble to secure them. Here, then, is a matter in which the priest ought to be lavish with himself. To be a spendthrift on books is a very fine form of liberality. It is a noble characteristic to stint oneself in bodily comforts and pleasure and to lead an abstemious life in

other things, but in the buying and the reading of good books a man may go to the extent of his means and still deserve praise.

When you enter a rectory and see there an abundance of the right sort of books, neat, attractive, lying about where they are most convenient at odd moments, then you may be quite sure that the priest of the parish is a man whose intellectual life is active and worth while. But he who is not a lover of books must waste many moments that he could use with endless profit to himself and others.

A Pestiferous Abundance

Next in importance to the principle of having plenty of good books at hand is that of keeping away the clouds of cheap, worthless, time-wasting periodicals and books which flow about everywhere, driven on the winds of highly commercialized selling organizations. The purveyors of cheap literature know only too well and act only too persistently on the principle of the book at the elbow. The reason their wares are so universally read, to the exclusion of much better literature, is that they make them so pestiferously convenient.

A man has a moment to read, and a newspaper is popped under his nose or is lying on the table by a curious legerdemain, so instead of reading a good book he spends half an hour with news of absolutely no importance, or in reading the cheap flap-trap of some hack writer whose opinions and ideas are of less

worth than the bad paper and blurred ink which carry them.

Or there is some dressed-up magazine, reeking with the world, the flesh, and the devil, like a bit of cheap and poisonous candy, flavoured and coloured to meet a depraved popular taste. Yet, the flashy magazine is so convenient and so outwardly attractive that many a one will pick it up for a moment's recreation instead of making an effort to get a worth-while book. We have to manage ourselves with forbearance and circumspection, allowing for our own weakness and, therefore, we ought as far as possible to keep the cheap and alluring stuff at a distance and to provide ourselves with books so interesting and so worth while that we shall prefer them to this mass of miscellaneous periodical literature.

Yourself as Others

When you come to consider what books to choose for your spiritual reading, you ought again to treat yourself as you do other people. If a member of the parish should come and ask for suggestions about such books, you would consider what manner of person is making the request. There are many good books, but not all of them appeal to all readers. If you did not know the person well, you would begin to make some inquiries as to his education, his interests, and so forth.

To one who was thoughtful and educated, you might recommend *The Imitation of Christ.* To another, of simpler tastes, you might prescribe for spiritual

stimulus the lives of the saints written in popular and interesting style. You know your own mind and your own tastes. Cater to them prudently in the books you have about you. Study yourself as you would a third person and take advantage of your mental likes and dislikes to encourage yourself to read.

Finding Good Books

Every priest ought to pay frequent visits to the Catholic bookstore or look over the reviews in Catholic periodicals, not only to seek reading matter for his people, but especially to find attractive books for himself. This is a very laudable self-service, for every good book you read will make you a greater source of spiritual help to your people. Those priests are fortunate who live in a city where there is a Catholic bookseller, with a complete stock of Catholic books, new and old, or who can take frequent trips to large cities and look over the publications with a view to selecting his spiritual reading.

For those who cannot actually see and handle the volumes, the better class of Catholic reviews offer a substitute. Not a few Catholic booksellers will be very willing to send books to the priest on approval so that he can look over them and return the ones he does not wish. With our modern facilities and with the constantly increasing output of good books from Catholic publishers, there is no reason why our priests, even in the most remote places, should not have access to abundant reading.

The Holy Writ

Will it seem superfluous to suggest to priests of our time that they often read, and attentively ponder the Holy Scriptures, especially the New Testament? Yet is not the fact plain that the multiplicity of other books, the many commentaries and volumes of sermons, the press of other occupations, make priests at times dispense themselves from taking in hand the inspired books themselves, and thoughtfully pondering over them, especially over the very words of Christ, as expressed in the Gospels? But what reading is more priestly, what mental occupation more Christ-like than this? The great priests of old, the great Doctors of the Church, the apostles of nations, the confessors and virgins, loved no book so well, used none so often as the Holy Scriptures.

The early Christians, the hermits and cenobites of the desert, the consecrated virgins of both sexes who laid the foundations of religious life in the Church, the great ecclesiastical writers, all loved and meditated on the scriptures beyond any other book or document. When the great Augustine received the grace of conversion a voice admonished him, *tolle, lege!* and from thenceforth the Holy Writ was his most constant teacher. It is true that in the breviary many passages from Holy Scripture are offered to the attention of the priest. But the Holy Office is read quickly. There is no time to pause and ponder. Every priest ought often to take up the gospels and eat and digest them mentally, by leisurely thought and study.

Now and always, as of old, they are the greatest and most precious of all spiritual books, and no one is better prepared by education and office to feed on their divine teaching than is the priest.

The Saints

The lives of the saints, especially of those saints who were priests, offer charming material for the priest's spiritual reading. Divine Providence has given some beautiful and historic examples of priestly zeal in such men as St. Francis de Sales, St. Vincent de Paul, St. Philip Neri, and the Curé d'Ars, and their lives are interesting and attractive from a human viewpoint as well as from the spiritual side. The lives of the saints as they are written nowadays have a human appeal which makes them very delectable reading.

Since the saints had often a great influence on their own time, historical culture and a better understanding of human nature are precious by-products of such reading. The priest who becomes really interested in their lives will find his knowledge of human nature growing deeper and his historic background richer, and he will be able to give many an interesting turn to his instructions to his people from his fresh remembrance of incidents, sayings, and examples gleaned therefrom. But most precious of all to him will be the spiritual help and tonic and inspiration received from dwelling on the lives of these great servants of God.

Their Profound Influence

We are all, by nature, imitators, and our better nature is profoundly influenced by the heroism of the saints. Faith is made more real by their faith, hope more ardent and active by their great hope, and charity, the characteristic virtue of all the saints, leaps out like a flame from the pages of their history and touches the heart of the priest. We shall devote a chapter to the priests and the saints.

In the busiest day there are some moments at which a priest may reach out his hand for a bit of quiet reading. If no such moments offer, it is his duty to make them during the day, for just as the body must be fed, so the soul also must have its food. If he stretches out his hand for some cheap periodical, some vapid newspaper, the precious moments for reading are often wasted or worse. If, with due solicitude for his soul's food, he has surrounded himself with good and beautiful books and takes now one and now another in hand, the taste thereof will be sweet and the memory precious and he will give forth to others the more abundant strains of spiritual thought and holy motive, because he has in his own soul the fountains of life and holiness, more deep and plenteous because of the influence of good books.

XVI. THE PRIEST'S DEVOTIONS

DEVOTION is the sweetness of piety. The great devotions which have grown up in the Church of God, give zest and variety to the life of the faithful. Our human nature, which is so bound down to concrete and material things, so dependent for all its knowledge on the senses, craves for the aid of devotions to help us know and love and worship God. When God became man, and took on Himself a nature like ours in everything except sin, He made it far easier for us to know Him and to love Him. If we had been nurtured in Judaism, and then had suddenly come into the full knowledge of Christianity, how our heart would have expanded and our love for God have grown deeper.

Under the Old Law, the Law of Fear, we should have had to worship a God invisible and unattainable, who seemed remote and distant from us, though he was near. Under the New Law, the Law of Love, we have God made visible, with a Body like our body, a Heart like our heart, and a Soul like our soul. The devotions approved by the Church minister also to this need of ours. In the devotion to the Sacred Heart, to the Blessed Sacrament, to the Blessed Virgin, to St. Joseph, we find great stimulus to piety. The variety of the Church's devotions, the various and beautiful mysteries which they bring to our attention, the concrete appeal they make to our hearts, these are all powerful aids to holiness.

Devotions Pleasing to Our Lord

Now, the priest, as a man, is in need like other men, of devotions to help his spiritual life, and he profits by them just as much as do other men. Indeed, since his vocation is loftier, since he is to be "another Christ," he needs them more than do other men. The Sacred Heart of Jesus was full of piety and devotion. The favourite devotions of our Catholic people, and especially of priests, to the Blessed Virgin, to the holy Angels and patron saints, reecho the piety of the Heart of Jesus. Devotions to the Blessed Sacrament and to the Sacred Heart tend directly to make the priest more Christlike, because they unite him more and more with the incarnate Son of God.

Devotions to the Blessed Virgin, to St. Joseph, to the other saints, tend also directly to make him more Christlike, because these devotions are consecrated by the Heart of Jesus. Who first practiced love and reverence toward Mary and Joseph? It was the Sacred Heart. Before the world knew of them, before our hearts beat with love of that most pure Virgin and her holy spouse, the Heart of Jesus was practicing, day by day, a filial and tender devotion to them.

Loving With Christ

When we priests love the saints, when we praise them and promote their honour, we are also becoming more like to the Sacred Heart, for Christ cherishes in His Heart each one of the saints, and here again it was His Heart which first gave them love and devo-

tion. When they were still on earth, when their glory was hidden, when the inward beauty of their characters was still unseen by men, Jesus Christ loved them, cherished them, glorified them in His Heart.

Hence, the priest, who is a man of deep and lively devotion, is only imitating his divine Master. He is becoming more and more *Alter Christus* — another Christ. The more ardent and fervent is our priestly devotion, the more Christlike we become. We can never achieve the full measure of fervour which will make our hearts altogether like the Sacred Heart in devotion, but we can always come nearer and nearer to that divine goal.

From the standpoint of his own spiritual interests, the priest will do well to cultivate the great, approved devotions of the Church. In speaking of priestly happiness, we have called attention to the great part which piety plays in that happiness, how devotions foster piety. It is difficult to conceive of a truly pious man who is not inclined to the approved devotions of the Church. We must be pious according to our nature, and our nature tends to express itself in devotions. Thus, from every viewpoint a wise priest will examine into his own devotional life, will try constantly to grow in solid fidelity to the chosen devotions which he practices.

Devotions and Feelings

Let us here again remark that devotion and pious feelings are quite different things, though they often

go together. Devotion is in the will. Nevertheless, spiritual delight and consolation, a warmth of the heart and satisfaction of the nobler feelings, almost always follow the faithful practice of a devotion. When we come really to love the Sacred Heart, the warmth and sweetness of that Divine Heart seem to flow into us.

When we love the Blessed Virgin ardently, the pure charm of her character fills us with the joy which a son finds in loving his mother. When we have a childlike confidence in St. Joseph, the mighty power of that great saint seems to brood over us sensibly, and we come to delight in and to love him as Jesus loved him. If, therefore, we attend to making our lives devout, the goodness of God will supply whatever feelings we need. But devotion always remains primarily in the will. We may be very truly devout, even though our feelings are dry and cold.

Sources of Devotion

Before we speak of individual devotions, let us ask ourselves what means the priest can use to increase his devotion in general. The answer which every one will give, is prayer, especially meditation, and good reading. The very simple principle that the mind, like the body, grows on what it feeds on, that it is strengthened by good food and weakened and sickened by bad food, lies at the root of the efficacy of spiritual reading. To read a good book, which is interesting and suitable for us, makes our

mind teem with good thoughts, devotional thoughts, pious thoughts. As we have said before, in speaking of the priest's reading, he needs what other men need and he may profitably take the advice which he gives to others, to read an abundance of good books.

Prayer brings down on us the grace of God and in this way helps devotion, for devotion which is worth having is a supernatural act of the mind and the heart and, therefore, needs God's grace. But besides the efficacy of prayer to win for us the gift of devotion, it has the further effect of deepening our devotion by exercise. "Practice makes perfect," is just as true in the spiritual life as in any other department of human effort. Prayer is practice in devotion. This is especially true of the form of prayer called "meditation," which, as we have said, consists, not in the motion of the lips, but in the movements of the mind and heart.

Enviable Labour

It is difficult to make a good meditation. It always was and always will be. Sometimes, indeed, the spirit of God lifts us up and carries us on like a babe in his mother's arms, but this is not the usual lot of all. Generally speaking, a good meditation is the result of the labour we put into it, the efforts to elicit acts of the memory, the intelligence, and especially the will. All the saints have found it a real labour to meditate. They had often, of course, to an unusual degree, the visitation of God's grace which made mental prayer for that while easy for them.

But St. Teresa was not the only one of the friends of God who was tempted at times to shake the hour glass so as to make the meditation hour pass more quickly. Let us be encouraged, therefore, to make meditations faithfully and they will deepen our devotion more, perhaps, than any other one exercise.

Then, it goes without saying that the faithful practice of devotions renders us more devout, particularly when we have to make some special effort and some painful sacrifice to be faithful to our devotions. Such voluntary efforts and sufferings increase both our merit and our devotion. These are familiar principles, but it is well for us to recall them from time to time and apply them directly to ourselves, lest we who preach devotions to others should ourselves become dry and indevout.

Devotions to the Blessed Sacrament

When we ask ourselves which devotions are most suitable to priests, it is not difficult to decide. The Church herself has her great, favourite devotions, and it is these that ought to be dearest to the heart of the priest, and that are most suitable to his priestly character. First in importance comes devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, and many, many opportunities offer themselves to the priest each day for practicing it. The service of the Blessed Sacrament forms a large part of our priestly duty. We ought to accustom ourselves to great reverence and attention whenever we are in the presence of our Lord. It is in-

evitable that the very daily recurrence of our service to our Eucharistic Lord will tend in itself to lessen our attention to His presence, unless we make special efforts to renew that attention. Therefore, we ought to concentrate, so to say, on this devotion and exercise our ingenuity in practicing it.

Chief among the details will be frequent visits to our Eucharistic Lord and frequent spiritual communions, both most becoming in the priest. Happy the priest who can honestly say that he never loses a reasonable opportunity of making a visit to the Blessed Sacrament. Our official duties, so to say, require us to enter the Divine Presence so often, that one may mistakenly think that this service is sufficient to express our devotion. But generally speaking, it is by works of super-erogation that devotion shows itself most sincerely. The visits the priest makes, without any other reason than to reverence and adore the hidden God, most attest his devotion and most increase it.

Frequent Spiritual Communions

As to spiritual communions, the priest who practices them frequently cannot fail to have a very tender and real devotion to the Holy Eucharist. The fact that frequently during the day we send our mind and heart to visit our Lord and invite Him to dwell within us, is a very sincere proof of our deep devotion. The fruits of spiritual communions must be very great. If to desire to do an evil action is so wicked, to desire

to do so good an action as to receive our Lord, must be extremely meritorious. Wise, therefore, is the priest who urges himself to frequent remembrance of the presence of our Lord in the Sacrament and to frequent desires to receive Him.

Devotion to the Blessed Virgin

Next after devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, comes devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and this, too, is inexpressibly becoming and blessed for the priest. Mary is the mediatrix of all graces, and every child of God must look to her hands to give him the spiritual favours of Christ. The priest, who needs more graces than other men, ought to have more devotion to Mary. Again, since we are to be "other Christs," we ought to imitate the greatest devotion which His Sacred Heart felt for any creature. Another reason for practicing this devotion is that the Blessed Virgin Mary gives to her clients that special virtue of innocence and purity so excellent and indispensable for the priest.

The Blessed Mother can win for us all the graces needful for success in our priestly calling. It is she who can best help us to melt the frozen heart, to bend the stubborn will, to win back those who have gone astray. She is the mother of the Church, the official advocate of all the faithful, the special patroness of priests. Since we are "other Christs," we are in a particular manner her spiritual children, and we can speak to her as to a most loving mother who is endlessly powerful with God.

Forms of Devotion to Mary

Our practice of devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary will naturally take the form of praying to her, speaking often of her, trusting in her intercession, instructing our people about her virtues. We should be willing to go to great effort and great sacrifice to make the Sodalities of the Blessed Virgin prosper. Devotion to St. Joseph, her spouse, goes hand in hand with devotion to the Mother of God. In Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, the members of the Holy Family, the priest can find a secure refuge, mighty helpers, constant sympathy, tender love. These dear friends, glorious in heaven, are spending their eternity in helping priests, and it is true in a special way that no priest ever sought their aid or asked their intercession without obtaining mercy and relief.

The Daily Rosary

The daily recital of the beads is surely a devotion which every priest ought steadfastly to practice. True, we have our Holy Office and many duties compete for the hours of the day, but for our own sakes and for the good of our souls we ought always to have the rosary between our fingers for some quarter of an hour during a busy day and to repeat those prayers, fragrant with devotion, which form for us a crown of roses to lay daily fresh at the Virgin's feet. What we say to the people concerning the rosary, we ought to observe ourselves, to recite it with thoughtful devotion, recalling at least for a moment

at the beginning of each decade the sacred mystery which we commemorate. We ought to have a definite intention in our prayers, so as thus to increase our sincerity and fervour. We ought to offer up our beads for all those for whom we wish or are bound to pray.

The Stations of the Cross

One would think that in the Stations of the Cross the priest would find so much consolation, such renewal of fervour, that none who can possibly do so, would omit the making of the Stations every day. In their simplest form, the Stations of the Cross are wonderfully easy, and as wonderfully consoling. Here we see depicted fourteen of the most moving episodes of that great drama of love and suffering, the passion and death of our Lord for our sake.

All we need do is to go from one station to the other, breathing a few prayers at each, and lovingly reflecting, at least for a moment, on the event which is commemorated. How happily we may renew our own personal immolation with the immolation of Jesus. We feel that this devotion of the Stations of the Cross, so familiar to us, so easily practiced, contains a mine of strength and sweetness for the priestly soul.

Devotion to the Saints

Then there is the great garden of devotion, fragrant with various perfumes, lovely with different flowers, which is furnished us by the lives of the saints. We priests of this age are the richest of all

the generations of the priesthood in devotions in general, and in particular in devotions to the saints. Nearly twenty centuries of the Church's history lie behind us. In the apostolic age the priests of that day knew only in anticipation of the splendid procession of noble souls, who were to illustrate so faithfully the sanctity of the Church. The many holy lay folk, men and women, the many members of the clergy, the many religious of both sexes whose names are familiar to us, whose lives may be known to us, had not lived in those earlier days. They existed only in the mind of God.

Now, they have fought the great fight, they have bequeathed to us all the human appeal and heavenly sanctity which is in their histories. It is a sad loss to a priest not to have the habit of reading the stories of the saints; and few ways of using his time are so fruitful as this. It has been said that the lives of the saints shows us Christianity in action—a very true saying. The saints make the precepts of Christ live for us. They show how possible and beautiful it is to follow Him closely and heroically.

A Profound Topic

This subject, the devotion of the priest to the saints and his reading of the lives of the saints, repays the deepest reflection. We have only been able to skim, so to say, over the shining surface of this profound subject of the priest's devotions. Yet here, as everywhere, merely to touch upon such

thoughts will stir up in the priestly soul a self-examination which will have fruitful and blessed results, will bloom out into a deeper and more pious devotional life.

When we break to the faithful the bread of devotion and encourage them with all our might to follow the desires of the Church in this regard, we may not be unmindful of our own spiritual welfare and happiness. What is good for them is good for us, and the same holy reasons, the same holy methods and zealous care which we recommend to them in practicing devotions, we may well commend with an even more intense earnestness to ourselves.

XVII. THE PRIEST AND THE SAINTS

WE have said, in the preceding chapter, that one of the most valuable of all forms of spiritual reading, is reading the lives of the saints. It is one of the most interesting, as well. A well-written life of a saint (alas, that they are not all well written) puts us in touch with a great personality, an heroic servant of God, and gives us something of the inspiration which good example brings. For the priest, in particular, this form of spiritual reading is of great utility, both for his own spiritual life and for his work for others. We shall all do well to give a good part of our reading time to the lives of the saints.

Example Surpasses Precept

The force of example is beyond the force of precept. No one can otherwise teach us a thing so effectively as by showing us how it is done. The saints show us how to imitate Christ with persuasive effectiveness by imitating Him themselves, and the great life of a saint brings Him vividly before us as He really was, puts us in possession of the technique, so to say, of the imitation of Christ.

The richest heritage of the Church, after the life of Christ and His Blessed Mother, is to be found in the lives of the saints. No other age possesses such an abundance of these histories as does our own. Never have the true characters of the saints been so faithfully studied, the real meaning of their lives so

thoroughly explored as in our day, for we can apply the historic methods of the present to the devotional heritage of the past.

Even the poorest priest nowadays, in the most remote hamlet, can secure for himself copies of the lives of the saints, because printing presses have so increased in efficiency and books are comparatively so cheap and so numerous. It lies with us to utilize these opportunities and to make the heritage of the lives of the saints our own and pass it on to our people. Of course, not everything about the saint is to be imitated, nor were all their deeds equally excellent. A man must read with discretion and use his own reason in deciding what would be commendable today and what is to be admired rather than imitated. But most priests will find it easy to make these distinctions and they will draw from the lives of the saints more vivid realizations of beauty of holiness and a more keen conception of what it means to be a Christlike man, "another Christ."

Material for Sermons

Not only will the reading of the lives of the saints convey to the priest a wealth of spiritual inspiration, but it will give him precious material for sermons and instructions. Our Lord in His discourses to the people made copious use of concrete illustrations and in doing this He appealed to their human nature. For what is definite and concrete appeals to the

imagination as well as to the intelligence. He made us as we are and He understands the mainsprings of our being.

Tales and stories, concrete examples and illustrations, are very useful, especially in spoken discourses when people have not the time to ponder over what is uttered as they have when reading a book, but where they must catch hold of the thought before it dies away on the air. When the speaker, therefore, tells a story from the life of a saint, or narrates a concrete example of virtue from the same source, the people more readily catch his meaning, and they carry away with them the memory of the story and the thought attached to it, when they would have overlooked or forgotten a mere abstract statement.

Abundant Illustrations

A priest who is very familiar with the lives of the saints and who remembers the salient points of their history will most likely intersperse such illustrations and anecdotes generously through his sermons. But if he is not an habitual reader of those lives, it is unlikely that he will ever take the trouble to look up some special incident when the occasion arises. Even if he wished to do so, he would find it very difficult to put his finger on an apt anecdote just when he needed it. For this the memory must be so enriched with such anecdotes that it can select, out of a multitude of details of the lives of saints, the apt anecdote or illustration for the occasion.

Then, too, the fondness of the priest for the lives of the saints and his genuine interest in them will enable him to induce his parishioners and all over whom he has influence, to read these lives. It is not only lamentable, it is really discouraging how little some of our Catholic people know about the saints, how unfamiliar they are with even the great outlines of their history.

Now, the one way in which they can become familiar with these heroes and heroines of the Church is by making a practice of reading their lives. Unless the priest himself is familiar with these lives and loves them, he will give little guidance to his people in this manner of reading and without that guidance it is morally certain that the people will not read the lives of the saints, save in exceptional cases.

The Saints Make Converts

Besides their spiritual value, the lives of the saints have also a great usefulness in the field of apologetics. Holiness is one of the marks of the Church and the holiness of her members is a convincing argument for her truth and Christlikeness. This mark of holiness shines out with special beauty and clearness in the lives of those whom she has raised to the honours of the altar. Here are the most charming and attractive, as well as the most noble and pious of all humankind.

We have a singular instance in our own day of the efficacy of the lives of the saints to spread the faith

and to interest non-Catholics therein. St. Thérèse, the Little Flower of Jesus, so recently raised to the honours of the altar, is drawing to herself not only multitudes of our Catholic people, but also not a few well-disposed non-Catholics who are charmed by her personality as it is set forth in her autobiography and in other books concerning her, and who render her honour and invoke her intercession.

The love and affection they feel for this dear little saint must react favourably on their attitude toward the Church, for they can hardly fail to see that the religious system which produced so lovely and harmonious a character, is full of the spirit of Christ. In fact, it has been recorded that a Protestant congregation set up her statue and prepared a shrine in her honour—extraordinary reverence for them to show to a Catholic nun.

The Glory and Beauty of the Church

We all know how great a devotion non-Catholics have and express toward St. Francis of Assisi, and St. Francis de Sales also enjoys the esteem and love of many outside the Church. But if we encouraged Catholics and non-Catholics alike to read the lives of the saints more frequently, we should see the apologetic value of their lives made more effective.

Again, much of the glory and historic beauty of the Church is summed up and expressed in the lives of the saints. They took part in great religious movements, they played important rôles, some of them, in

history. The perusal of their lives, therefore, puts us in more complete possession of the history of the Church, brings us in touch with the piety of past ages and at the same time acquaints us more effectively with true history. The more, therefore, the priest can promote and encourage the reading of the lives of the saints, the greater service he will do to Catholics and non-Catholics alike. But he can hardly persuade others to read these lives unless he is a fairly constant reader of them himself.

For the Priest's Lifework

To be familiar with the histories of the saints adds zest and interest to the priest's own personal lifework. As we read the Holy Office, day by day, we find therein set down, the homilies of St. Augustine, of St. Gregory, of St. Leo, of the Venerable Bede, of St. Jerome, of St. John Chrysostom, and of all the array of Doctors of the Church from whose precious works the Holy Office takes its lessons. We know something, of course, gathered perhaps in a haphazard way, about these great personalities of Christian history. But if we take the trouble to study their lives, to become intimately acquainted with their career and personality, how much more interest and reality are attached to their homilies and instructions.

Then, too, the lives of the saints will throw a great light on our own priestly labour. A number of these saints were priests and their efforts and trials, their difficulties and triumphs, will be an encouragement

to ourselves. We have already spoken frequently of the example of St. Francis de Sales and of the Curé d'Ars; St. Vincent de Paul, in his priestly labours, offers us another model. So, too, do the great missionaries, St. Francis Xavier, St. Francis de Hieronymo, St. John Francis Regis, and a multitude of saintly missionaries of recent times.

These men had to cope with the difficulties we have to encounter. They were soldiers in the same great army of Christ; they withstood the same temptations, overcame the same difficulties as we have to overcome, and their discouragements and trials as well as their successes, will be an inspiration to ourselves.

A Knowledge of Human Nature

The reading of the lives of the saints will also give to the priest a much deeper and truer knowledge of human nature than the perusal of novels and works of fiction, though there is profit to be got from the best of these also. But these lives show the warfare between the flesh and the spirit, and the ways which led to victory, more clearly than any other sort of reading.

The Art of Spiritual Warfare

According to the luminous idea of the great Marshal Foch, Generalissimo of the armies of the allies, the art of warfare requires constant practice and study, and since it is impossible to be continually at war oneself, and to wage battle after battle, the principles of this art are to be gained by constant

study of the great campaigns of the past, and the constant application of the principles discerned therein to real or imagined situations.

In the spiritual warfare, the priest is the general and he is not called on to follow through, like the soldier, the campaigns of Caesar and Alexander, of Napoleon and Wellington, of Hindenburg and Foch, but he has to study the great campaigns of the spirit, waged by men and women who have won glorious victories for Christ, and have achieved immortal triumph for their success. By observing how they fought and conquered, he can learn how to direct his own campaigns.

More Interest in the Divine Office

The reading of the lives of the saints brings also to the priest a new savour and interest in the recitation of the Divine Office. It is true that in the second nocturns we have often presented to us a summary of the saints' lives, but these accounts are necessarily very brief. If we have read the life of the saint *in extenso,* even the brief summary of the second nocturn will bring back to us many reminders of him or her who is especially honoured by the Church on that day.

The endless variety of the characters and experiences of the saints form a marvelous panorama of human life and character. Who can read the life of St. Philip Neri without intense amusement as well as earnest admiration. Not without reason did the Romans, who loved him so dearly, call him the Holy

Fool. He did such whimsical things, played such amusing pranks, and showed such a spirit of human kindliness and humour, that one must often put down the pages to laugh.

The autobiographies of the saints, and their letters, possess a special interest. Peruse the correspondence of the great St. Teresa of Avila and observe with what rare humour and gentle human kindness she dealt with her correspondents. In these letters there shines forth a character so amiable, so genial, so fun loving at times, that we feel ourselves truly brothers of this great ecstatic and contemplative, who, at the same time, was one of the most kindly and lovable of friends.

Rich Material

The nearer the saints come to our own time, the more material, of course, is at hand for us in their biography and the more vividly we can come in touch with their personalities. Of some of the saints we have authentic portraits, and the places where they lived are still preserved. But even where this wealth of modern material does not exist, we can still come to know the saints more intimately, in many instances, than we know our own daily associates. Divine Providence has seen to it that their innermost thoughts have been recorded for us. The struggles and victories of their obscure days have been made known to us. Thus, we can look into their minds and hearts with greater comprehension than into the minds and hearts

of those who still live about us, but who keep their own thoughts locked up in their own consciousness where we cannot penetrate.

Kings, Scholars, and Beggars

One lesson above others taught by the lives of the saints is most precious for the priest—the lesson of the great importance of the inward motive and intention which animates our actions. The saints differ in every conceivable aspect, save in their love of God and in the living of their lives for His love. They were of the most diverse stations in life, some were beggars, like St. Benedict Joseph Labre, some were kings, like St. Louis of France, St. Henry of Germany, St. Edward of England, some kitchen maids, like St. Rita of Cascia, some queens, like St. Margaret of Scotland and St. Elizabeth of Hungary.

Some of them were simple countrymen, like St. Isadore of Spain, others philosophers, great scientists, and great scholars, like St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Bonaventure. Thus, the priest, surveying all this various field of saints, will become more and more convinced that the greatness of the outward act means little, but the inward intention everything. Then his own work, however obscure, will seem luminous with opportunities and he will see that the most obscure and hidden day that he passes in the sacred ministry may be made glorious by many little acts done for the great love of God.

Intimate Friends

From these same lives the priest will also learn not to be a respecter of persons, not to esteem anything but the image of God in souls. The beggar who comes to his door, the poor and ignorant woman who kneels in his confessional, may be more pleasing in the eyes of God than the most cultured and exquisite visitor. In the hurly-burly of life we see only the exterior appearances. In the lives of the saints the veil is lifted and the shadows dispelled and we see men and women as they are in the sight of God. It is a great help toward encouraging ourselves to reading the lives of saints to have attractive ones always at hand, to the reading of which we are impelled by interest as well as a conscious duty.

Just as food is best digested when it is eaten with appetizing relish, so the lives of the saints are best assimilated and remembered for future profit when we feel a vivid interest in them. To read as a mere matter of duty without any inward attraction is more of a task than an enrichment of the mind and the heart. In the great multitude of the lives of the saints, one surely can find some which will be personally attractive to ourselves. While we should love all the saints because they are friends of God, there is nothing to prevent us from having our preferences and from choosing to read those which appeal specially to our individual interest and meet our individual needs.

In fact, it is necessary for us to make a selection, for no man, even in a long lifetime and with more leisure than a priest ever has, could possibly read all the lives of the saints. But have a really interesting and attractive life on your desk or study table, a life to which you feel a real attraction and which you are anxious to read, and you will be surprised at how many moments of the day you will pick it up and how soon you will run through its pages.

The pressure of other occupations, a certain natural inertia, mental sloth, distraction, the over-abundance of ephemeral, but amusing print, all these things are direct or indirect obstacles to the reading of the lives of the saints. Put them from you with a strong hand and take up manfully the books which have most to do with your own vocation and your work among men. You will never, either as a priest or as a man, regret the moments which pass by in the attentive reading of the lives of the saints. These friends of Christ, these imitators of Christ, can best teach you how to be "another Christ."

XVIII. THE PRIEST'S TIME

THERE are twenty-four hours in everyone's day. An average priestly life is, let us say, thirty or forty years. Many priests are very much alike in their capacity for work, their talents, and other qualifications. At least there are only a very few who show startling departures from the average, in their qualifications for work in the priestly office. How is it then that some priests seem to accomplish so much in the course of their career, as compared to the efforts of others, equal to them apparently in every regard?

Is it not the use of time which largely makes the difference between priest and priest? Surely all of us ought to examine with great frankness how we use our time. The thought is very familiar to us that life is short and eternity unending. To realize the practical application of that thought to our own selves is not so easy. An exercise in the realization of the preciousness of time and an examination into our use of time should be helpful and practical.

Differing Demands

Priests differ, of course, a great deal, in the demands made on their time. The parish priest in a busy city parish, continuously besieged with calls on his time and attention, finds the whole day all too short for what he feels he should do, and his problem is largely one of fitting into each day its various

works. At the other extreme, the priest in a quiet country parish finds his problem to consist in devising ways of using his time profitably, for, from Sunday to Saturday, he receives very few calls from his people.

Between these two extremes one finds every stage of strenuous occupation or ample leisure. Thus, every priest has a slightly different problem of the use of time, which, however, can always be stated in the same general terms; namely, to employ each day to the best interest of Christ and of souls, and to occupy his time as "another Christ" should do.

The Thieves of Time

The priest has less difficulty than most men in determining whether he is using his time well or ill. By his very vocation he is entirely dedicated to the cause of Christ. A day, therefore, which is spent in the honest discharge of duty and the promoting of the interests of Christ is a well-spent day. Time which is allowed merely to pass uselessly and without relation to the service of Christ, is wasted time. There was a Latin play quite popular in the seventeenth century which had as its title, *"Processus Contra Fures Temporis."* It was a mock trial, at which all the various thieves of time were brought to bar, one by one. So the priest may well conduct a judicial process in his own mind, to call up for judgment all the thieves which waste and steal the precious moments of his day.

He will sometimes find that it is not so much the work he has to do that keeps him everlastingly behindhand and makes it seem that he has no time to spare, but rather, not infrequently, it is the lack of method and system in his work that makes the day run by without sufficient achievement. If a man were to check off accurately, even for one day, his use of time, he would be surprised how many moments were wasted through lack of systematic arrangement of work.

When we speak of method and system, we do not mean to advise a wooden adherence to a schedule. All that is required is an orderly arrangement of the work of the day and the prompt taking up of one task after the other. A great deal of time is often lost because a man does things in a haphazard manner. Merely arranging one's work in order, and going promptly from one thing to another, saves time.

Futile Conversations

Useless conversations are another source of wasted time. Talk is never useless when it has some good result, but merely to exchange idle remarks, to talk on insignificant topics, can waste time surprisingly. We are warned that we shall be accountable for every idle word, and moral theologians tell us that idle words are words uttered without any utility. But even though our words be not idle, they are sometimes so much less useful than other things we could do besides just talking. Great talkers waste great intervals of time.

Another source of the waste of time is slowness in beginning things. Everyone finds it a little difficult to overcome the inertia that waits upon beginnings. To do a certain thing at a certain time is much more difficult than to dawdle along and begin a little late. The effort a man makes to be prompt in beginning things gives the whole work before him more speed and vigour and makes his merit surely that much greater. Sloth shows itself most often in beginnings, and the priest who does everything a little late, increases his habit of tardiness and at the same time loses a great deal of time.

The Kingly Courtesy of Promptness

All the public services of the parish, any appointments we have with the people, ought surely to be kept with great promptness. An old saying tells us that punctuality is the courtesy of kings. No one can compel a king to be punctual. He shows his kingly courtesy in being on time without compulsion. A similar saying might well arise concerning priests, that punctuality is their truest courtesy, because all the members of their congregation depend on their being punctual, while no one of them can enforce such a punctuality.

To begin Mass and other ceremonies a little late, or perhaps to be fitful and variable, now coming out exactly on time and now wasting a great many moments before beginning, is not only a loss on the part of the priest, but a cause of great vexation to the

people. The priest who is always on time, in all his services, wins particular esteem for his promptness, and he will get through far more work than the man who always allows himself some time of grace to dawdle and delay before beginning.

Desultory Reading

Desultory reading is in our day one of the greatest and most widespread sources of the loss of time. Priests, like everyone else, nowadays, are deluged with periodical literature of a nondescript character, meant, for the most part, to be amusing. Reading is one of the greatest of our commercialized amusements, and while amusement in its place is excellent and necessary, the priest, or any other man, who spends hours on periodical literature, is wasting those hours on a very cheap and trivial form of entertainment. Take, for example, the reading of newspapers.

To glance over them day by day is looked on almost as a necessity, as a man must keep abreast of current events. Yet days or even months of men's lives are spent uselessly, or even harmfully, in reading those same newspapers. The first ten minutes of reading may be a useful employment of time. The next ten minutes is of dubious utility. A longer time is mere squandering of precious moments, unless there is some particular topic or event on which the priest feels he ought to be better posted. To spend half an hour a day with one's nose in a newspaper means more than a whole working day every month,

nearly eighteen working days a year, about half of a working year out of every decade, spent in reading newspapers.

Lack of Proportion

Another source of the loss of time is a lack of proportion in one's work. A priest, of all men, ought to evaluate his occupations and grade them in his own mind according to their real importance. Then he will be able to disengage himself from comparatively useless things and put in his real work and devote his energy where it will be most effective. There are some people who are continually busy, who never have a moment to spare, and yet who accomplish extraordinarily little, because they are so often occupied with something of no importance. There are other men who live a calm, quiet, and unhurried life, and yet do their duty well and thoroughly, because they observe a certain prudent perspective and refuse to give themselves to trivial things, reserving themselves for really important work.

If we go into a very busy office, we see hundreds of employees rushing about, extremely busy, now here and now there, running machines, casting up accounts, tabulating sales, each one apparently with a thousand things to do. In an inner office, where an atmosphere of calm and leisure prevails, sits a man who has on his shoulders the responsibility for the entire complicated business. Yet one might think that he was the idlest man of the institution. He comes down to the office late, and spends a few hours making impor-

tant decisions, seeing the heads of departments, and solving the problems they are not competent to handle or have no authority to decide.

Then, early in the afternoon, away he goes and spends the rest of the day at a golf course or recreating himself in some other way, so as to recover the nervous energy and repair the wear on his brain and nerves. He has done more in a few hours for the real welfare of the business than any one of the busy employees could do in a week or more, and still he has this appearance of leisure, because everything that can be done by anyone else is carefully kept away from him, so as to leave him the time and energy to grapple with the important interests of his business.

Yet, this one man is more valuable and receives more payment for his work than twenty or thirty of the detail workers outside. Very likely, if he is a really first-class executive, his services are competed for by a number of other organizations. He has trained himself to disregard useless details and to concentrate his energies on important problems.

The Service of the Faithful

The priest may never assume this attitude of concentration and aloofness because, after all, he was ordained for the service of the people and has to be to a certain extent at their beck and call. Yet he will best serve the people by keeping likewise a prudent perspective in his work and observing the principle of just proportion.

The method and system used by the priest has to be built on the needs of the people. In the morning, at a certain time, he must say Mass for them and perhaps hear confessions before Mass. Then he must receive the visitors who come to him for help and advice. The sick are to be visited, the school perhaps to be looked over, catechetical instructions to be given, and in the afternoon and evening visitors come again to take the time of the priest. But if he trains himself in a kindly briskness, an alert promptness and dispatch in settling questions, he can do in an hour more work than he could in a day if he had a desultory, unmethodical manner of receiving people.

When visitors come, the first few moments of their visit is given to really profitable conversation. If the conversation goes on interminably and they talk on all manner of useless things, precious minutes are wasted and yet no real good is done. The principle of proportion, together with tact and prudence will guide the priest in dispatching endless talkers to talk somewhere else, and in transacting his business and doing his work with a dispatch which will leave him time for other things.

Exercise

In planning out his day, a priest should always allow some time for bodily and mental exercise. It may be that his necessary travels about the parish will give him what fresh air and walking he needs to suit his constitution. However, it may occasionally be

helpful for his physical well-being to take a good walk. When we are in good physical condition, with sufficient exercise and fresh air, we are much more likely to be good-humoured and patient.

The laws of health are, after all, the laws of God, and no man can disregard them heedlessly without becoming answerable. Sometimes the work of the priest makes it almost impossible for him to attend properly to his bodily needs, but this is a violent situation and ought to be remedied. It is a rare situation as well, because by foresight and prudence and a right arrangement of his work, even the busiest man should be able to get off for a short time during the day to take a brisk walk in the open air. In this regard, the prevalent habit of using an automobile for short trips in the parish has deprived many priests of much healthy walking.

Amusements

In regard to amusements which do not involve much physical exercise, such as the attendance at games and contests, every priest will naturally decide for himself how much or how little he really needs of this sort of entertainment. If we are conscientious in the use of our time, we shall be the best judges as to whether or not it will be a waste of time to do these things. Sometimes a man returns from such an outing with calmer nerves, a mind refreshed from the petty cares of the day and a more patient and kindly outlook. At other times he will feel that he has really

wasted precious hours which he might have spent in taking exercise or in doing other more important things.

A great deal of time can easily be wasted in such amusements, and while this waste of time is very readily condoned in lay folk, who would not be doing anything very much better if they did not become baseball fans and football enthusiasts, with the priest it is not so. He loses far more by wasting his time in this way than lay folk do.

Reading and Writing

The same principle applies to the securing of some moments for good reading. The priest, like everyone else, needs some mental food and stimulus day by day. What we have said of spiritual reading would be perfectly profitless to the priest who did not take time each day for reading. Unhappily, most people are inclined to observe an injudicious order in their use of time so that they keep putting off the interests of their soul and mind, hour by hour, until all the moments of the day have gone by.

This is true sometimes, even of the recitation of the breviary, so that the priest, in the late hours of the evening, finds that he has done a hundred less important things and left his Office to the last.

It is also very advisable for those priests who are inclined to literature and have some time for writing to set aside some time every day for the exercise of writing as well as of reading. Force of habit is so

mighty that if a priest will begin to give even half an hour from a busy day to literary composition, after some time he will have developed such a habit of self-expression so that he will feel an impulse to write frequently.

A Page a Day

The sum total of such effort, at the end of the year, will be found quite surprising. If a priest were to write enough each day to fill a typewritten page, double space, he would be composing at the rate of three hundred and forty words each day. If he kept this up for a year, day by day, he would have written 124,100 words. A fair-size book contains 42,000 words. Hence, a page a day would result in a year in the composition of about three books of the average size. If then, the priest would average two or three pages of typewriting every week, he could readily write a book in the course of a year.

We give these figures not to encourage the writing of many books a year, but rather to show how a little daily effort will mount up in the course of a comparatively short space of time. Similar calculations along other lines will bring home to us, even more vividly, how daily effort, faithfully continued, mounts up in the course of the year. Suppose that a priest's active hours during the day number ten, and that he spends half an hour a day in reading; half an hour a day will, as we have noted before in speaking of the reading of newspapers, be equal in a year to about eighteen of the working days of the priest.

How much useful information, valuable material for sermons and conversation, inspiration and help for the priest's spiritual life, can be gathered in eighteen whole days of reading of ten hours each! Yet this is the reward of half an hour a day faithfully devoted to good reading for a year, and if the priest were to devote eighteen full days at a stretch to such reading, he would get much less benefit from it than the persistent practice of reading half an hour each day will bring.

The Sum of Waste

Let us reverse the picture and remind ourselves again that to waste half an hour a day on desultory reading means the waste of eighteen ten-hour days in the course of the year. To spend eighteen whole consecutive days, of ten hours each, in poring through trashy novels and cheap periodicals would be unthinkable. Yet it is an equivalent waste of time to give half an hour a day to reading the "best sellers."

Such thoughts as these are profitable to everyone. Who would not be the better for taking more careful account of the use of his time? But it is specially good and wholesome for us priests to ponder on our use of the passing hours because not only our personal interests, but the interests of Christ and His flock are concerned with that use.

Before we finish speaking of the use of time, it would be interesting to recall an observation once made by a wise old priest. The remark is useful to

everyone, but especially so to the priest. "Everyone," said he, "should have three sorts of hobbies. He should have a spiritual hobby, some special devotion to which he can turn in moments of dryness and weariness and always find consolation and spiritual refreshment there.

He should have besides some intellectual hobby, some study or intellectual pursuit not in the line of his regular and necessary work, but which he can take up at any time for mental refreshment. Finally, he should have a physical hobby, some exercise or physical occupation which will most refresh and help him to bear the physical strain of his ordinary work." It would be wise for the priest to call himself to account and see what are his hobbies and in how far they bring to him the benefits of refreshment and recreation which the old priest had in view in giving this advice. It is strikingly true of us that our time is not our own. We have devoted it to Christlike service. Our days are consecrated to a task so holy and a cause so noble that it is more creditable in us than in other men to use every moment well. We shall be worthy of our name and our calling only when we spend our lives prudently and industriously in the service of Christ. Time is made of moments, and only the right use of each passing moment, will make us worthy to be called "other Christs."

XIX. THE PRIEST'S HOUSEHOLD

EVERY priest is a public character. He is ordained for the service of the people and hence to him multitudes of people must come. The places in which he meets them are first, the church and second his own dwelling. The parish church and the parish residence stand side by side and the priest is to be seen now in one place, now in the other. Hence, the household of the priest has an importance not to himself alone, but to all his parish. It is for himself first and then for all the people, for himself to dwell there and for them to come there and visit him.

The Atmosphere of the House

Though their visits are for the most part made in the parlor or the reception room, still the whole atmosphere of the house impresses them and influences them. Though they may not be very observant or susceptible to environment, they are unconsciously aware of the whole house through what they perceive in their many visits. For the sake of his people therefore, as well as for his own, the priest will endeavour to make his household all that it should be, and the priest's household has high standards and requirements.

Jesus Christ is the Model of all priests. Since they are "other Christs," they must look constantly to Him to determine what is well in all the details of their lives. As a man's dwelling place and his household

are so important to him and his people, it is well for us to inquire what is Christ's ideal of a priest's household and what does He desire to find there.

At first thought, one might be tempted to take the household of Nazareth as a standard for the priest's dwelling, but this is rather an example for the Catholic home. Whether our Lord dwelt with His Mother and St. Joseph and afterwards with His Blessed Mother only, or whether, as some students think, He lived in a larger household with others of His relatives and their children, still His early life was passed in seclusion, in the privacy of a home. His home life, when He was a child and young man, are a perfect model for Catholic home life in general. During those precious years our Lord gave an example to all Catholic families.

Spirit, not Letter

But when the time came for Him to leave His home and go forth to the years of public ministry, then it was that Christ in a special manner began to give an example to priests. Even then it is the spirit of His life that we are to imitate, not the letter, for our Lord chose to be without a dwelling place, a wanderer in search of souls, preaching and teaching through the highways and byways of Judea, so that the life He led was more like that of the missionary than that of a parish priest. Still we can easily recognize in the teachings of our Lord and from His way of living what He desires the household of His priests to be.

We can arrive at the same conclusion in considering the manner in which the most prudent and edifying priests manage their households. When a man is full of the priestly spirit and besides is prudent and judicious, his household is very likely to be, if not a model, at least a very good indication of the household which Christ desires for a priest.

For, given good common sense in a priest, and an earnest desire to do the will of God, the interior inspirations of God's grace will show him what is best in his own situation. Enlightened and guided in this way, he will make his house what a priest's house should be. Let us consider, therefore, from both these standpoints, from the teachings and example of Christ and from the example of model priests, what should be the outstanding features of the priest's household.

Comfort Without Luxury

The general characteristics of such a dwelling are not far to seek. It ought to be neither too poor nor too rich, but comfortable, dignified, and convenient enough for all purposes, while showing nothing of pretentiousness or luxury. This is mere common sense. On the one hand, the house of the priest ought to be commodious in every needful way, so as to give him strength and facility for his work. But it is just as important that it be free from all reproach of luxury and excessive comfort, for the edification of the people. We serve a crucified Lord, and Christ Himself was so simple in His life, so severely abstemious,

that He evidently wishes to give an example to all His followers, and to His priests in particular, of a simple life.

Luxury and Christlikeness are absolutely incompatible. To be self-indulgent and an excessive lover of comfort and elegance, is simply unthinkable in a true minister of Christ. Our Lord was very emphatic, in speaking of Himself, to point out how really destitute He was of bodily comforts. The foxes have holes and the birds of the air nests, but He the Son of God, did not provide for Himself even a place to lay His head.

He evidently does not wish His priests to imitate Him in this severe self-denial, because they could not do their work unless they had a permanent abode and one sufficiently convenient to serve their purposes. But surely there is a strange inconsistency in the priest who lives in deliberate luxury and still serves a Master and a Lord Who had no place to lay His head.

"I beg of you," says St. Jerome (*Ep. LII ad Nepotianum,* 5), "not to seek your own worldly gain from the priestly service of Christ. Do not possess any more than you had when you began to be a cleric. Shun like a plague the clerical trafficker, who becomes rich where he used to be poor, lofty where he used to be lowly."

Convenience and Comfort

So long as the priest's house and its furnishings are really useful and in keeping with his office, they may consistently be very convenient and even very

comfortable, for comfort and convenience are an aid to good work. But as soon as he feels that he is exceeding the bounds of prudent frugality and is beginning to live luxuriously, at that moment he should call a halt.

So far as the house itself is concerned in which the priest lives he often finds this ready-built when he comes to the parish. Those priests who are building houses will always do well to consider the probable effect of the house on the public opinion of the parish. The people like to see a well-built and seemly house for their parish priest. But if the edifice is so expensive that prudent and sensible parishioners begin to criticise in their own mind the excessive cost, is there not reason to fear that such sumptuousness is a little less than Christlike. The golden mean in parish architecture is very much and always to be desired.

Furnishing the House

The furnishings of the priest's house ought to be to him a subject of serious consideration, whether he has the task of furnishing a new house or of remodeling the furnishings in the old. Good taste ought to prevail. Good taste is an intangible thing, but none the less it is very real. The Church has been the mother of great art and the patroness of what is beautiful. True beauty and good taste are alike in harmony with the religious spirit. What departs from good taste is thus far less worthy of the service of God and of His minister.

Now, tasteful, harmonious, and beautiful furnishings are no more expensive than what is in bad taste, gaudy, and unpleasing. Not every priest, of course, has the gift of discrimination in such matters, and, therefore, one ought to seek, if necessary, expert advice on these subjects, and to insist that what he wants in his home is not merely decoration, but true good taste and quiet beauty. If the priest's house be a model of refinement and good taste in its furnishings, it will have a good influence, from that standpoint, on the parents of the parish and on their homes.

Pictures and Literature

There are two details of the furnishing of the priest's house which call for special notice. One is the pictures in the house and the other the books and periodicals. Of all men, the priest should give a good example in the matter of the choice of his pictures, and this is not so easy as it sounds. It would be easy, if priests were to confine themselves to adorning their homes with the religious works of the great masters, in beautiful reproductions.

The Church is the richest of all human societies in great and beautiful art. During the period of the Renaissance, when art had reached its zenith, the churches and the monasteries and the homes of great ecclesiastics were the best patrons of painters and sculptors of that day. For this reason, such masters as Raphael, Murillo, Titian, Van Dyke, and lesser lights, like Carlo, Dolci, Sassoferrato, and the rest,

painted multitudes of beautiful and religious pictures —Madonnas, Holy Families, and episodes from the life of Christ and of the Blessed Virgin. We are the heirs of all this wealth of art, and the difficulty of the priest will, therefore, not be to find beautiful pictures to adorn his dwelling, but to choose amid the profusion that is offered him.

No priest is so poor as not to be able to have an abundance of these beautiful pictures, for perhaps the most accurate reproductions of them are to be found in the hand-coloured photographs, so plentiful in Italy. From the Italian firms, or from American dealers in pictures, the priests can obtain these coloured photographs at a comparatively moderate rate. The painted copies of great masterpieces are likely to be far inferior in point of accuracy to these coloured photographs. Engravings and etchings may also be had, but at a much higher rate. The abundance of reproductions of Catholic art, however, is so great that any priest need have no difficulty in getting beautiful religious pictures.

The Priests' Books

As to the books in the priest's house, much has been said, and much more might well be added. They are of great importance from the viewpoint of his own spiritual interests and of those of his flock. A priest who loves books, reads the best books and constantly has them about him, will be much more likely to take an interest in plans for promoting Catholic reading in his parish. It is unfortunately true that

some priests who are incessant readers themselves, succeed but little in getting their people to read. But this is not for want of interest, but for lack of method. As methods are developed and practical plans proposed, it is these priests who are likely to work the hardest for good reading.

Every priest ought to be a lover of books. It is in keeping with the priestly character and office, and he who does not love reading or who has not very good taste in reading, is to that extent unfortunate. The priest in a busy city parish has to snatch moments for reading, but if he loves books, he will find many a quiet hour when a less earnest reader would be doing something else not nearly so profitable as devouring some excellent book.

The priest's books ought to be kept in circulation. One sometimes sees, in parish residences, fine collections of books which are in a static condition. They never move from the shelves. They play, therefore the part, not of books, but of ornaments.

Books ought to be used, kept moving from hand to hand. As ornaments they are doing only one tenth of their mission. In the buying of his books the priest surely should exercise a good deal of discretion. Whim and fancy, more than judgment, sometimes preside over the purchase of books. Of course, a man's choice of books will be coloured a great deal by his personal character and preferences, and this is as it should be up to a certain point. But there is such a thing as

being overinfluenced by one's personal preferences. Sometimes a priest should buy the books that he needs rather than those that he likes.

Manners and Conversation.

Pictures and books have a great influence on the atmosphere of a dwelling, but manners and conversation play an even greater part in making a house seem a home or else in giving it other, and less pleasant characteristics. The manners and conversation in a priest's house ought to be unexceptionable and, of course, they usually are. But the more refined, elevated, and urbane the talk and manners become, the more fit is this house to be the habitation of a priest. The American people are usually opposed to anything they consider "highbrow," and "highbrow" is a term of reproach among them, indicating pretense of refinement or culture.

But genuinely cultured and intelligent talk and really fine manners are surely to be expected in the house of a priest. The people who come to see the priest, even the most simple and poor of them, are always influenced for the better and edified by an atmosphere of urbanity, culture, and kindliness, while they shrink from, and are repelled by anything that they consider less than edifying in the household. We may remark again, in this regard, that poor people and those thought to be uncultured are sometimes more sensitive than others.

Priestly Hospitality

The friendliness and hospitality of a priest's household ought of course, to be of a very high grade. Generally speaking, priests are among the most hospitable of men and this is as it should be. When a brother priest comes to the household, he should be treated truly as "another Christ," and this without respect of persons. Hospitality and friendliness should and do stand high in the list of priestly virtues.

The priest in particular will wish to keep in mind and to insist on the practice of that rule which St. Augustine made so emphatic a part of the law of his own household at Hippo, when he hung up in the dining room the terse motto: (Possidius, *Vita S. Augustini,* 22:)

Quisquis amat dictis absentum rodere vitam
Hanc mensam indignam noverit esse sibi.

words which one might translate a bit freely as follows:

He who loves with words the absent friend to flay
From this humble board had better keep away.

Personality and the Household

It is interesting to remark how the household of the priest reflects his personality and in turn influences his personality. The power of environment is very great and our tendency to modify our own environment is also quite notable. The one reacts on the other. Little by little, when the priest lives in a

house for a long time, the house becomes redolent of his personal character. The books and pictures gathered there are the expression of his taste or lack of taste.

The indefinable atmosphere of the house, which one can feel better than describe, is the result of his dwelling there. Hence, a priest who wishes to know more of his own character, ought to study his surroundings and look about him to see what manner of house he keeps. We grow so accustomed to our own surroundings that they seem to cease to produce any impression on us. It is quite an experience deliberately to survey the environment we have created for ourselves, with the view to see how it reflects our own personality.

The Housekeeper

Any remarks about the household of the priest would be highly incomplete without some words about the priest's housekeeper. She plays a very important part in the household and it is influenced and coloured by her personality to a degree second only to the influence of the priest. It is her part to keep the house clean and sightly, neat and habitable. It is she who prepares the food or sees to its preparation, she who takes care of most of the material needs of the house. To be a priest's housekeeper is to render no little service to the priest and through him to the Church of God.

Some good Catholic women find what is almost a lifelong vocation in patiently and competently minis-

tering to the material needs of the priest's household, and the value of the work they do and the importance of the place they fill is realized sometimes only when they have passed away or have become incapacitated for further labour. Then, how difficult it is to replace them and how deeply a priest realizes what he owes to a faithful housekeeper.

In choosing his housekeeper he will naturally be guided by the interests of his whole household. If he can find the right one for this important office, most of his domestic difficulties will be over. Whereas, if it is impossible to find the right housekeeper, then it is useless for him to expect a calm, tranquil, holy, and pleasant home.

The Training of Housekeepers

It is surprising that more attention is not given to the enlisting and training of priest's housekeepers. Their training would naturally take the form of an apprenticeship with some model housekeeper of long experience. They could work with her, and for her, for a few months at least, until they learned how to deal with the special needs and problems which a priest's household may present. At the same time they ought to have some spiritual instruction. Has enough care been given, enough material been prepared for the instruction of priests' housekeepers? There are in the United States some ten thousand parishes, in most of which the parish house is in charge of at least one housekeeper, and sometimes two or

three are employed there. This means that some ten thousand Catholic women are rendering this important service.

The greater part of them are competent and devout, and do their work very well. But even they would be helped by suggestions and inspiration. They are playing the part of Martha, and toiling with hands and mind to keep the priest's home pleasant and comfortable. They deserve even more consideration and appreciation than they now receive, and more help in their sometimes arduous task.

XX. THE PRIEST IN THE COUNTRY

THE priest in the country parish has problems and difficulties quite peculiar to himself. Between his work and that of his city brother in a large, busy parish there is a striking difference. The city priest is kept constantly busy interviewing callers answering telephone calls, going out to visit the sick. His people live close about him and they can drop in and see him at almost any moment. The congested population of cities brings the priest much more occupation during the week than do the scattered dwellers in country parishes. Thus, the city priest has very little difficulty about employing his time. It is taken up for him. His study must be to use time profitably and to do the most important among the many things that press for his attention.

In the Small Country Parish

The priest in the small country parish has no such demands upon him. Sometimes from Monday to Saturday he has hardly anything to do. True, some country parishes are busy and offer almost as much occupation to the priest as city parishes. The common use of telephones and automobiles has drawn country dwellers closer together. Yet, for all that, there still remain quite a number of country parishes where the priest has very little to do between Sundays.

Some country priests solve this difficulty by going to the city as often as possible. They have automo-

biles or they are in convenient reach of the railroad so off they go on Monday and do not appear again until the following Saturday. But this manner of using time is a very poor expedient. A priest's place is in his parish, and though he might be justified in taking an occasional vacation, he can hardly be satisfied with himself when he runs away from his field of labour for all but the busy days of the week's end.

Various Pastimes

Some country priests take up various forms of recreation to pass their time. In summer they fish and in winter they hunt. They play golf or drive about in automobiles. These things, again, offer a certain amount of healthy recreation, but they are hardly a part of a priest's lifework. A true priest, ordained for the saving of souls, is never satisfied nor happy unless he is working for souls. Therefore, such occupations, while they pass away the time, do not bring real satisfaction to the priestly heart. What, then, is the country priest to do? Shall he spend his time pottering around the lawn, mending the church, building additions, making new altars?

All these things have been used by priests as ways of passing time and they are good as far as they go, but neither can they give a priest real satisfaction nor make him feel that he is accomplishing his lifework. Perhaps it will be helpful to set down a few thoughts on the way a country priest may profitably use his time, and though what is said here may not quite

meet the approval of the reader, still it will serve to begin a train of thought which may bring forth some profitable conclusions.

Some Serious Work Needed

The first principle one might lay down in this connection is, that a priest who has not enough to occupy his time in the duties assigned him, ought deliberately to take up some work which is important enough and priestly enough to give his life a substance and a meaning. It is not enough to be occupied in order to be happy, but a man must have an aim in life, a great purpose at which he is driving.

Many thousands of human beings at the present time, whose wealth puts them beyond the need of labour, are conscious of a deep dissatisfaction with life. They keep continually occupied. They never have a moment of time on their hands, but the way they use their time is unsatisfactory because they have no great purpose in life.

Those who have a work to do and a purpose to achieve in life become interested in their work and wrapped up in their purpose and they forget the annoyances and wearinesses of each day in the satisfaction of some definite achievement, whether in business, in professional work, in literature, and so on through the list of human activities.

But people who have no great purpose in life, though they may do many useful things and keep eternally busy, are essentially dissatisfied. They think

too much of themselves because they have not some great important object to think of. They become introspective and nervous. How many nervous breakdowns arise from this cause and how many dissatisfied, restless people would become calm and happy if one could give them a great lifework to pursue and achieve.

Now, a priest is like all other human beings in this regard. If he has abundant priestly work to do, if he feels that he is constantly consecrating his time and efforts to a great cause, he will be fundamentally happy in spite of weariness, vexations, and even disappointments. He has set his feet on a path and is following it. But the country priest who takes up a number of little occupations, unconnected with his priestly office, and who has no real end in life, except to hear confessions on Saturdays and to say Mass on Sundays, will be discontented and restless; he may be doing many things, but they are not things which have one great end.

For this reason it would seem that every country priest ought to try to take up some work connected with the priestly office, which will really give him a pursuit and will impart a direction to his days. What are some of these lines of activity on which a country priest may enter?

Reading and Study

The one which comes most readily to mind, is reading and study. A priest by his very training in the seminary has the foundation of a good education.

He knows the general outlines of philosophy and theology, of scriptural study, of Church history, of moral theology, of pastoral theology. He has not specialized in anything, but has acquired only a working acquaintance with these great fields of human thought.

Any one of these departments of knowledge offers him many, many special lines of investigation, reading, and research. He can suit his own talents and inclinations. He can specialize in either philosophy or theology, dogmatic, ascetical, moral, or pastoral. It is not necessary for him to live in large cities to pursue his studies. He can obtain books wherever he may be, can order them by mail and have them sent to him even in the remotest mission.

The very quiet and leisure which he enjoys in his country parish are a help to real study. If difficulties arise and questions are to be answered, he can correspond with the professors in his seminary. If he can find a brother priest, not too far away, who may be interested in the same line of study, their mutual discussions and observations will help one another.

Cultivating a Taste

To this suggestion some country priests will answer that they have no taste whatever for study or for reading. The reply to this is that in such a case they should cultivate one. Any priest who merely yields to his own inclinations and does not take up any activity because activity is not naturally pleasing to him, is courting failure and personal unhappiness.

Besides, in a sense, no one likes to study. That is to say, no one likes the effort, the concentration of mind, the giving up of more appealing pursuits, which study inevitably requires.

The sayings that "knowledge makes a bloody entrance" and that "there is no royal way to learning" are true of everyone. What is easy to get is usually not worth having. For all real achievement man has to pay the price of effort.

In order to make this occupation of study effective, the country priest ought to lay down for himself a regular daily order. He ought to hold himself to certain hours for reading and study, certain hours for exercise and recreation. Because of the instincts of our human nature, there is a great deal of satisfaction in leading a regular, well-ordered life.

Such a life makes essentially for happiness and content. When we feel that day after day, in season and out, we are doing certain useful things at certain definite times, a content settles on our spirit. This is not a recommendation of woodenness nor of routine, but of fidelity and of order in one's life. Of all priests, the country priest can best maintain this order in his life because he is least disturbed by outside cares or exterior distractions. In the beginning of his experience he may fret at the order he has imposed on himself and find it difficult, but as Pythagoras taught his disciples, it is the part of wisdom to adopt the best life and to become used to it, because custom sweetens everything.

A Great Reward

A country priest who has the courage and self-discipline to lead a regular and studious life will be rewarded in many ways. He will experience a substantial happiness and satisfaction in his use of time. He will be spared the restlessness and self-reproach of an idle and useless life. His personality and character will grow deeper and richer by reason of his useful study. He will become a truer and better man and priest as a result of that wholesome knowledge he acquires.

His ministry and all his dealings with others will become more sure, more profitable to them, more satisfying and meritorious to himself because of his great learning. Finally, he will be preparing himself constantly for a wider sphere of action and a better opportunity in the future. The Church, like the world, is constantly looking for men of unusual qualifications. Mediocrity is never at a premium, but special knowledge and ability always are.

Country Life Less Distracting

Now, more than all other priests, the country priest has the opportunity to achieve all these desirable things, but only at the price of a regular, studious, and thoughtful life. Such a priest should be very careful, it would seem, in choosing the subject of his study so as to hit upon a line of thought and research which will be congenial to him, within his powers, and use-

ful and profitable in itself. It is not enough for a man to decide, for example, to take up the study of dogmatic theology. He might, indeed, spend some years merely reviewing his theology, and he would be surprised and pleased to find what new aspects, luminous realizations, and practical and helpful applications come to him from theological treatises and themes which he studied in the seminary, but was unable then to grasp in their full significance.

The rumination of thought, the chewing of the cud of quiet reflection, brings nourishment and sweetness out of long-known but little-appreciated truths. The human mind is so constituted that for true study it requires leisure, concentration, and repetition and, let us say again, no man is more advantageously situated for these things than the country priest.

But having sufficiently reviewed the general field of theology, the priest will do well to pick out some particular aspect or line of study which has specially appealed to him as useful to himself and congenial to his mind. With one man this theme of study might be an author or book of the Holy Scriptures. With another it might be some special group of moral problems, with another still some epoch of Church history.

Cardinal Wiseman once declared that every man should make it his aim to know something about everything and everything about something. From his seminary studies and his review of them afterwards,

the priest may well be expected to know something about everything that it befits his priestly office to know. In these special studies of which we speak, he will approach the second desideratum mentioned by the Cardinal, of knowing everything about something, something that is highly useful in itself and highly interesting to him.

Self-Discipline Needed

In suggesting this self-discipline of study and research, we are quite aware of all the difficulties which arise against it. The greatest of these difficulties is perhaps the fundamental human vice of sloth which makes us all disinclined to any unnecessary effort. In the seminary the student for the priesthood studied because he had strong incentives to do so which overcame his natural inertia, but once ordained priest, and set over a country parish and master of his own time, he feels a great disinclination to plunge into serious study and a great inclination to take it easy, at least insofar as mental exertion goes.

As a counterbalance to this inertia the priest ought to bring vividly before himself the motives for serious study: His priestly duty to use his time profitably, the personal merit and satisfaction he will gain, his continued happiness in the priesthood, his much greater utility to the faithful and to the Church, the greater service he will give Christ our Lord by such study, and the increased preparation he will achieve for future labours. If these motives will not suffice

to stir him out of that natural inertia we speak of, then there is no more to be said. He is simply forgoing freely a great opportunity of happiness and service.

System and Progress

Such a course of reading and study is much more advantageous than a mere general interest in reading and in books. The priest who is a great reader but unsystematic and haphazard in his reading will, to be sure, pass many pleasant hours with his books. But at the end of twenty years in a country parish he may find reason to ask himself what he has achieved by all that miscellaneous reading.

He has devoured secular magazines and newspapers, perhaps, to no end. He has read here and there in history. He has picked up the new books as they came from the press and neglected the old, thus directly reversing the famous resolve of the man of letters that whenever a new book came out he would read an old one. The mind of such a man after twenty years of desultory reading may be but little richer and stronger than before. His personal efficiency may be little, if any, increased. His sermons may be as commonplace and his conversation as ordinary as before his eyes traveled over this intolerable deal of useless print. He has passed time pleasantly, and that is about all.

But the man who has a definite purpose in his reading, who reads to an end and with an aim, after even a few years of such systematic effort, is quite definitely

a better man, clearer in mind, more methodical in thought, wider in information. He is becoming an authority on that particular point, and just as the acquirement of one of the cardinal virtues draws with it the possession of the others, so, in some way, the thorough mastering of one department of human knowledge puts a man in possession of various other fields, though not to such a great degree.

Preparing to Write

Another suggestion that seems very useful for the country priest, is, to take notes of what he reads and studies and keep them in neat order. These notes form a visible sign of his mental achievement. The taking and keeping of such notes give him a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment. The effort to reduce his knowledge to concise form and set it down in words, helps assimilation and understanding. *"Legere sine calamo somnium est"* said the ancient scholar. This taking of notes and reducing of knowledge to terms of one's own speech will be an easy approach to another excellent activity for the country priest, that of writing as well as reading.

Abundant Talent

A good deal of various experience has convinced us that the talent for useful writing is much more common than is thought. Many educated men and women could become useful authors, at least in a modest way, so far as their natural talent for self-

expression goes. But the "will to write" is much rarer than ability to write, and it is the will to write that makes authors. There are many mute inglorious Miltons who are so, not because of lack of talent, but because of the lack of the desire to write.

In a book entitled *The Training of Writers** we have put down this thought in much more detail than is possible here. Suffice it to say that there are quite many priests who could do good work with the pen and who never achieve anything of this service, because they lack the will to write.

Church Architecture

Besides the subjects which we have mentioned, which ought to be interesting to all priests because of their training, there are others also which may well form subjects of priestly study for those whose inclinations lean in that direction. Church architecture is one of these, and everyone knows how vast it is in its various divisions and how rich and interesting a field for study it offers. The books available nowadays are good and numerous. Photographs and reproductions of churches and cathedrals in this country and in the old world can readily be had. The priest who studies church architecture will probably find many opportunities in his career for utilizing his special knowledge. We cannot have too many priests who are well instructed and who have good sound taste concerning the building of churches. Witness the huge sums of

* Macmillan, N. Y.

money that have been expended in our land in raising up monstrosities of architecture which remain expensive mistakes, legacies of awkward bad taste, for coming generations.

Ecclesiastical Art

Another rich and various field for priestly study is ecclesiastical art in all its branches of sculpture, painting, and church decoration. No other group on earth is so rich in its artistic traditions, in its heritage of beautiful pictures and structures as the Catholic people. Yet it ought to be our everlasting sorrow that so many of our people have no idea of that heritage, no taste nor appreciation for the beautiful art of the Church.

Indeed, non-Catholics sometimes show far more enthusiasm and appreciation for Catholic art than do our own people, and generations of Catholic children have grown up in the United States utterly unaware of the bewildering richness of the Catholic art of the Renaissance. The priest who becomes an adept in Catholic art is, therefore, enriching his mind and imagination with beauty and devotion, and is preparing himself to communicate to the Catholic people the heritage of art which is their right.

Parish Study Clubs

The priest who thus devotes himself to some useful line of study should find that his influence over his people increases and that he is able to convey to them something of the wealth of Catholic learning, of the

appreciation of Catholic art which he himself has acquired. His sermons will be richer, his talk with his people more helpful. To convey a real enthusiasm for personal culture requires that a man himself be burning with the fire which he wishes to enkindle.

The forming and conducting of study clubs will be a very good help to the country priest in carrying on his own studies. If he is going in for Catholic art himself, he will do well to form a little club of his people to study it, and then he can communicate to them the results of his own investigations. Time was when such a suggestion might have seemed highly impractical for a rural pastor, because of the distances that separated country people from their priest, and even now in some parishes the priest may not see his way to forming a study club, but the automobile has so lessened distances, and good roads and speedy cars have brought country people so much closer together, that it is possible to have study clubs even in country parishes.

Rural Culture

Indeed, not long ago we visited a country parish and went thence to some outlying missions to say Mass for the people. We were very much interested to find, in a town five miles from any railroad, a well-established study club conducted by the people of the town themselves where good work was being done and serious efforts made to study history, art, and even political economy.

Schooling is so universal nowadays that even in lonely country parishes the priest can find active minds to join him in his studies, and country people are often better suited for such activities than city folk for the reason that they still are preserved from some of the rush and distraction of modern civilization. The movies have not yet thoroughly invaded the country districts. The hurry and strain of life is not so intense there as among more congested populations. Hence, sometimes, the country priest will find the disadvantages of distance far more than counter balanced by the industry and interest of his people.

The Fallacy of Numbers

Besides, we must avoid the fallacy of numbers and must be content to have even a small group of interested people for study clubs. A very good study club can be formed with five or six, eight or ten members, and most country pastors could find at least that many are willing to study Catholic art, Catholic history, or kindred topics. Would that we could witness a revival of the old study-club movement which did so much good a few decades ago, but which seems to have died out so completely in many places where it used to flourish. Studious priests could do more to resuscitate this movement and promote it than could any other class of men.

Finally, we must not forget that where one man might find little to do in a country parish, another would discover many useful works for his people.

Country pastors sometimes give up in despair the task of forming active Catholic societies in parishes, but this seems a great mistake. Why, with the improved methods of transportation, should it be impossible to have fervent Holy Name Societies and Sodalities of the Blessed Virgin and similar groups in the country parish?

If need be, they could meet in neighbourhood groups at designated houses to sew, to read, to work together in other ways. If the country priest will carefully study the conditions of his parish and try some courageous experiments, he will often find that, where he might have thought little was to be done, there is actually more work waiting for him than one man can accompish.

Enriching Country Life

Some country priests are discouraged to see that there is a constant drift of Catholics from the country to the city so that the country parishes are becoming depopulated in certain regions. In some towns where there used to be a resident priest the Catholic families have moved out in such numbers, selling their farms and going to the cities, that there is now only a handful of people, unable to support a priest.

The country priest who acquiesces passively in this situation will find it very discouraging, but the priest who takes hold energetically and trys to keep his people contented in the country, where they are really much better off, who even endeavours to get Catholics

from the city to come out and settle in his parish, will find this a task which takes a great deal of well-spent time and effort.

Rural Depopulation

Some time ago, while traveling on the train, we met a priest from a country parish who asked us very earnestly to write on the depopulation of the rural parishes. He declared that the parish where he had been working for years had formerly been a thriving and prosperous one, but the Catholics constantly moved out, selling their farms to non-Catholics. One great reason they gave was that they desired to obtain the benefits of Catholic education for their children and there was no Catholic school in the parish. Others, no doubt, were attracted by the lure of the city. But the result was that the priest had seen his parish dwindle and dwindle until it was scarcely able any longer even to support one resident priest.

Now, the building of a school and the providing of sociability and friendliness, the fostering of interest in home life and community activities, and of great parish loyalty would tend to counteract this state of things. It is disastrous to the Church, as this priest remarked, that Catholic families, settled in country places, should give up their farms and move to cities. Statistics show us, he declared, that the average country family, moving into a city, dies out in the course of about a century. In the country, families are usually large and it is easy to support them on farms. Children are happier in the country. In the

congested life of the city, they are relatively much fewer, and the Catholic stock there tends gradually to die away.

The Check to Immigration

Hitherto, the Church has been increased in this country by immigration, but that source of supply has been cut off by our recently made laws. Hence, we must look forward to see the number of Catholics diminish if the present drift from country to city continues and if, arrived in the city, Catholic families begin to dwindle away. The country priest will do very well to study these conditions and try to remedy them. He will be greatly helped in his work by the Catholic Rural Movement, which is now well organized, with headquarters and a magazine of its own. No doubt the leaders of this movement will welcome correspondence from these priests, and will be glad to make suggestions to them for the upbuilding of rural parishes.

A Suggestion to Seminaries

Would it be out of the way to suggest to those in charge of seminaries that more special preparation be given to the future priests for life in the country? In many dioceses the usual process is to assign the newly ordained priest to a city parish where he remains for some years under the direction of an older priest who is the chief pastor. The young man is thus thrown immediately into the variety of interests and constant occupation of a city parish. Some years pass, and a country parish becomes vacant. The young priest is

given charge of it and he leaves the city life to which he has become accustomed for the seemingly empty and tedious existence of a country priest.

He spends some years, perhaps, getting accustomed to the monotony of country life. He is tempted to get away as much as possible, and he hardly knows how to go about studying the conditions of his new life. He is a city man suddenly transplanted to the country. Perhaps his whole life before had been lived in the city and he is quite unaccustomed to country circumstances and conditions. Even if he does adjust himself profitably to his new life, he loses considerable time in doing so. Would it not be practical to give him, in the seminary, some definite trend to help him pick out some specialty of study that he can take up as soon as time allows, and to impress him with the opportunities and advantages which the country priest enjoys and with the merits of work in a country parish?

An Objection and an Answer

No doubt, those in charge of seminaries have already given this matter sympathetic consideration. Of course, the objection may be raised that no one knows just what work a young priest will be assigned to on ordination, or afterwards, since this must necessarily depend upon the immediate needs of the diocese and the decision of the Ordinary. But no matter what special priestly work he is called on to undertake, he will always profit by these beginnings of per-

sonal initiative and personal culture, and on the other hand, he will always be at a disadvantage unless he has received some guidance as to the use of his leisure hours.

Nor are the suggestions we are here making confined in their utility to the country priest alone. Young priests in the city parishes have also hours during which they could take up some of the work we have been describing. A little better order of time, a more systematic plan for study, the spirit of self-improvement, would enable them likewise to use the precious years of their young priesthood to much better advantage for their own good and for the salvation of souls.

A priest's life, like every man's life, is brief at best and the rich opportunities which it offers are soon withdrawn with the passage of years. If these remarks encourage even one young priest to make a better use of his life and its opportunities, they will have served a precious purpose and richly justified the effort to set them forth.

XXI. THE PRIEST AND CATHOLIC ORGANIZATIONS

THE priest, in his own parish, which is definitely bounded according to the decision of ecclesiastical authority, has both jurisdiction and responsibility. There are some priests who have no parish cares. They work here and there in the vineyard of God, preaching, writing, teaching, where they are sent by ecclesiastical superiors, and find the need or the opportunity. But to the parish priest is given a definite part of the vineyard, hedged in and defined. He is responsible for his own parish. His is the credit if all goes well. His is the responsibility if anything goes wrong.

Natural Distinction

It is no wonder, therefore, that parish priests draw a great distinction between parish organizations and extraparochial ones, between the societies for which they are directly responsible and those for which they are not. Their zeal is far more readily aroused and their interest much more easily excited by those societies for which they have personal responsibility. Yet both forms of organization expect much from the priest, and both concern him in a very special way. He must attend to the one without neglecting the other. Still the parish societies will always be his chief charge and care.

Christ's Example as an Organizer

Since it is the vocation of the priest to be "another Christ," one of the great lessons he has to learn from his Master is the need and the usefulness of organization. As soon as the Saviour of mankind began His public life, preaching and teaching, He also began to lay the foundation of an organization which was to carry on His mission and to accomplish the designs of His Heavenly Father. He selected from among those around Him, twelve men, chosen to be twelve "messengers" and the officers, so to say, of His organization, His Church. This Church was to be His other self, His mystical Body, continuing His work in the world.

These men He instructed and trained, keeping them near Him throughout His labours and teaching. After His glorious resurrection, He would not at once return to heaven, but spent forty momentous days, completing His instructions to them, perfecting, so to say, His organization, and He gave them a guarantee that this Church would last till the end of time.

Designed by infinite wisdom, the Church is perfectly adequate, as an organization, for the purpose for which it was established; namely, the salvation of souls. Its hierarchy of jurisdiction and of orders is the perfect form of government for spiritual rule. The army of priests administering the sacraments, preaching and teaching the people, is quite adequate to carry on the spiritual mission of the Church. So far

as the characteristic work of the priesthood is concerned, the religious organization of the Church is adequate and perfect.

Organizing for Devotions and Sociability

But, besides the essential work of the Church, there are many other works and interests, very important in their way, because they have a great deal to do, at least indirectly, with the saving of souls. The devotions of the Church, which one writer has compared to beautiful flowering vines that clamber up the trunks of the great trees of dogma, and give beauty and fragrance to the spiritual life of the Church, these need the help of organization to make them grow and flourish.

The social life of the people needs organization, especially in an age and a country like ours, when Catholics are mingling with so many other groups with very different principles and ideals, and need to be kept together and fortified against irreligious influences. Works of charity require organization, for though the unorganized kindness and helpfulness of one to another may go very far, it will not go far enough to relieve distress, and to accomplish good works adequately, in such a busy, complex, baffling civilization as our own.

Enlisting Aid

Therefore, though the priest, and he alone, can administer the sacraments and carry out the work of

Christ through his office of preaching, still, every priest in a parish has the solemn duty of utilizing the aid of organizations needed for the religious and social life of his people, and for marshaling their forces in charitable work. We all admit the truth of these principles, but it is well to recall them from time to time, and to examine ourselves as to how far we do our duty as priests toward Catholic organizations. That we have such a duty, at least in general, follows from what we have said about the necessity of organization as an auxiliary to the work of the priest for the sanctification of souls. He who is obliged to attain the end is obliged to use the necessary means.

Various Attitudes

There are various attitudes which priests may take toward Catholic organizations. In order to be helpful in our reflections, let us separate parish organizations from extraparochial ones and speak first of the attitude of the priest toward parish organizations. The priest may merely tolerate the organizations in his parish, let them run along as they like, and not bother his head about them much one way or the other.

To act in this way surely is "to sin through defect" as the saying is, by not taking enough interest in what is so important in itself and such a great means of spiritual good.

Another attitude is that of the priest who does too much himself in the affairs of his parish society, giving all the directions, doing all the "bossing," leaving

nothing for the members except a passive acquiescence in his decisions.

Such a manner of conducting societies, sins by excess, and is sometimes more objectionable than the former attitude of neglect. Grown-up people resent being treated like children, and the more able and energetic members of the society drop out, or become merely passive, because they will not submit to being domineered over and ordered about, as though they were incapable of managing their own affairs.

Too Many Changes

Next, there is the priest who is forever starting something new and then dropping it, only to begin another type of organization later on. The people get weary and distrustful with so many changes, and so they end by taking everything that is said about organization with a grain of salt. Then, too, there is the parish priest who takes a great deal of trouble and pains to organize one group of his parishioners, but leaves other groups with scarcely any attention, as if he had come to the conclusion that some souls are worth more than other souls.

All these attitudes leave something to be desired. They fail of the Christlike spirit of impartial interest and zeal, of helpfulness without tyranny, of rather teaching others than driving them, of perseverance in spite of adversity, of impartial zeal for the salvation of all souls. The ideal attitude of the priest in the parish toward the parish organizations is not so easy

of achievement. It is much more facile of description than of accomplishment. Yet it is well worth while for every priest to do his utmost to approach this ideal, because when he has solved the problem of parish organizations, he will also have seen many of his other problems greatly lessen or disappear.

The Falling off of Parish Societies

This achievement is the more important in our time, because the general tendency seems to be for parish societies to decrease and dwindle, while city-wide societies, and national associations, are continually on the increase. Each sort of organization has its own place, to be sure, but the parish is the accepted and official unit of the Church, and it would be a great pity if the parish societies should die out, for the national societies can never quite supply their place.

There are some priests who are born organizers, who have by nature so much tact, kindliness, and prudence, that it is easy for them to lead their people without driving them, and to get them to work effectively and prudently in the parish societies. But, for one man who has such a natural talent, there are many who can, by taking thought and care, have successful parish societies. Much the same virtues which are required for succeeding in any other parish work, to wit, faith, hope, and charity, prudence and justice, temperance and fortitude, and especially perseverence, will bring success in this.

Priests Who Succeed

If we study the priests who are most successful in parish organization, genuinely successful and in a lasting way, we shall find that they are men who do not attempt to do everything and decide everything themselves, but who give the lay folk a fair share of the work of discussion and decision. We shall find, too, that they act in general on that very wise saying of the old evangelist, "It is better to set ten men to work than to do the work of ten men oneself." This prudent principle, of using one's energy to set other people to work rather than to try to do everything oneself, is at the basis of all really successful organizations.

Christ, our Lord, certainly gave us a wonderful example of the wisdom of training and preparing others, and of setting them to work rather than doing everything oneself. His manner of organizing His Church was a great object lesson to the parish priest, who has to do in miniature much of what Christ did, in order to have his parish succeed.

Christ gathered about Him twelve Apostles, and devoted His energy and His care to preparing them, poor weak men that they were, for the most sublime of missions. The parish priest will do well to act with similar wisdom, to gather about him a group of lay folk, who will be faithful cooperators with him, and will do many things for the interests of the parish and the Church, and for the good of souls, which he himself could never accomplish. To train, to inspire,

to direct and guide these lay apostles of the parish, will require, on the part of the priest, the exercise of Christlike patience, charity, and perseverance.

He will often have to give up his own preferences, to sacrifice his own convenience, to bear patiently with defects and shortcomings. But he will be consoled in all this work by the inward vision of Christ, teaching His Apostles, bearing with their defects, persevering in their difficult and wearisome training with a loving charity to the end.

Cultivating Vocations

Many good priests keep a zealous eye out for promising aspirants to the priesthood or to the religious life, and this is worthy of all praise. They befriend the boys and girls who show some promise of aptitude to become priests or religious, watch over them and encourage them, until they see them safely entered into the seminary or the novitiate. Such a course surely brings a blessing upon the priest and his parish.

But do they take the same interest and care to encourage and train up lay apostles in the parish? Of course, the task is different. Those who become priests and Sisters, are forever after consecrated to the service of the altar, whereas those whom the priest encourages to become lay apostles, are sometimes found to move from place to place, or to disappoint the expectations of the priest, just when they are most needed in the parish.

This is no argument against trying to train lay apostles; for, in helping to encourage religious vocations to the priesthood, the parish priest also renders a service, not so much to his own parish, as to the universal Church, since it is very unlikely that all of these young people will come back to work in the parish. So, too, whatever he can do to train up lay apostles will be a service to any parish they may go to live in. Besides, it is rather more likely that some of these young people will come back to work with him, since they will become attached to him, and loyal to him, because of the interest which he has shown in encouraging them.

A Practical Suggestion

This suggestion was made by a very experienced priest, when we were discussing together the difficulties of parish organization, and had spoken especially of the dearth of leadership in parish societies and of the difficulty of obtaining competent and active officers, who would relieve the pastor of some of the burden of administration.

"Why," said he, "with all the good material we have in our parishes, would it not be possible for the priest deliberately to develop, from among his young folk, some specially zealous and competent ones, to act as officers for the parish societies? The priest might well give special attention to the spiritual training of these young folk, get them to go frequently to the sacraments, give them books to read, which describe the

careers of great Catholic men and women, who served God notably and sanctified themselves in the world. He could employ them in little deeds of zeal and charity, which would bring out their capacity, and willingness for self-sacrifice.

"Then he might have them proposed for election, as subordinate officers of the parish societies, where they may be tried, and if found capable and persevering, their education may be continued."

Coming from a man deeply versed, by experience, as this speaker was, in the difficulties of parish organization, this suggestion seems worthy of consideration. It will, at least, open the way for the parish priest to much helpful influence on his young people, especially on those whom he judges most capable of leadership.

Enlisting the Competent

At the present time, the parish priest is likely to find himself surrounded by a small group of lay people, men and women, who are called on for pretty nearly every service of initiative or leadership which the parish activities require. Sometimes, these right-hand men and women of the parish are possessed of the twofold qualification that they are docile and humble enough to take directions, and at the same time active and energetic enough to make their work a success.

It too often happens, however, that these parish helpers, while they are really good, humble, docile people, are not nearly so competent from the natural

standpoint as others in the parish. Those others are men and women with much more energy, initiative, and executive ability, but who cannot or will not meet the perhaps excessive demands of the pastor in the matter of docility and humbleness. What is the reason why the most capable persons in the parish, good Catholics, too, will sometimes not do their part as officers of societies or helpers in parish activities?

Usually there is fault on both sides, the people in question do not sufficiently understand the necessary direction which the priest must give to every parish enterprise and, on the other hand, the priest himself fails to allow enough for the natural sensibility and proper spirit of these lay folk. In such a case it is from the priest that most is to be expected in the way of considerateness and conciliation, because it is he, in the first place, who is directly responsible for the well-being of the parish, and, therefore, he ought to do everything in his power to secure the right cooperation. Then, again, it is he who is expected to be the more charitable, conciliatory, and helpful to these lay people who, after all, are only volunteers when they act as officers of parish societies and who are then performing a work of supererogation.

What the Priest Can Change

This reflection is all the more practical from the standpoint of the priest, because while he cannot change the way of action and the viewpoint of others, except through tactful kindness and persuasion, he

can at any time change his own way of acting. It is always useful, therefore, in cases where the competent people of the parish are not giving enough cooperation, for the priest critically to examine his own attitude and conduct, so as to see wherein he can be more considerate, tactful, encouraging, and thus gain more cooperation from his people.

The old saying, alluded to before, that "where there is a saintly priest there will be a good parish, a good priest a fair parish, a fair priest a poor parish," holds also in this matter of organization. Of course, the personal element always enters in, and the parish priest is fortunate indeed who finds himself happy enough to have some members of the congregation who are so good, and at the same time so competent, that they can and will carry on the work no matter what the pastor does or does not do. But we shall all do well when anything goes wrong for which we are responsible, first, to search carefully in our own conduct for the elements of disaster before we look for reasons outside of ourselves.

A Significant Instance

Once upon a time, when the writer was helping to organize a parish, and had been chatting with the pastor on the need of developing more leadership among the people in order to make parish activities a real success, the pastor began by saying that he had "no leaders in his parish."

"We have some men who are good citizens and

capable in directing the affairs of their own businesses and families," he said, "but when they come to a meeting of the St. Vincent de Paul Society or some other organization in the parish, they merely sit and listen, and look to me to make all decisions. Their principal remarks are "Yes, Father," and "No, Father," with monotonous repetition."

Toward the end of the discussion, however, the good priest was convinced and striking his hand on his knee he cried out, "We must absolutely get the men to take some initiative themselves!" "But you said awhile ago, Father, that the men will not take any initiative and merely sit and answer yes and no" reminded his young assistant. "Yes, that's true, now," said the priest, smiling, "but I realize after this discussion, that the reason they act that way is as Father says, that they know that is just what I want them to do. If they realized that I wanted them to take the initiative, and to do more of themselves, they soon would do so." A whole conference on parish organization is summed up in this single instance.

XXII. THE PRIEST AND THE YOUNG

EVERY priest as "another Christ" must have deep in his heart a warm, efficacious love for children. The Lord and Saviour of men bade His Apostles let the little ones come unto Him, because of such is the kingdom of heaven. Children are the most precious inheritance of the Church. These little ones, now so young and weak, are to be built up into the strong and noble Catholic men and women who will be the support and bulwark of the Church in the next generation. Every Catholic child is a treasure beyond price and no one who is not a prophet can say what blessings and holiness may not be bound up with the fate of any of these little ones.

How Could They Know?

Less than a century ago, a little lad walked barefoot to school each day from the house of his father, a poor Italian postman. The pious priests who helped this little lad, encouraged him and taught him, little knew that he was one day to sit in the chair of St. Peter and rule the Church. Yet this boy, whose name was Sarto, afterwards became Cardinal Patriarch of Venice and then was chosen Vicar of Christ, and took the title Pius X. So, too, priests of Lisieux, who preached, Sunday after Sunday, while a beautiful little girl and her aged father looked up from their pew beneath the pulpit in rapt attention, little knew

that their words were falling into a soul so dear to God that this little child would in less than fifty years be a canonized saint, the wonder of the whole world, an object of the devotion of the Catholics of every nation.

Great Destinies

These are exceptional instances. Yet no priest can tell, when he looks into the face of a child, what the destiny of that child may be in after years. In the ranks of our children's societies, on the benches of our parish schools, everywhere that Catholic little ones are grouped together, we might, if we had such power of foreseeing, point out the future priests and bishops of the Church, the nuns to be, as well as the devoted Catholic mothers and fathers of the future.

The good that the priest can do to older folk is necessarily restricted because of the limitations which age has brought to them. After a certain period of life, habits are formed, talents crystalized. The capacities of grown-up men and women are definitely known. But a child is a draft on the future, upon which no figures have yet been written. The priest can do more good, with a given effort, by helping the children, than in any other way of which one can think.

The Pope's Exhortation

We shall never forget, in this connection, the words of the Holy Father, Pope Benedict XV, at the conclusion of a private audience granted by him toward the end of his pontificate. We told him of

various good works which were being undertaken in the United States for the benefit of the Catholic people, and, in particular, of work for Catholic young folk. The Holy Father listened with great attention, putting questions now and then which showed the depth of his interest and his keen analysis of situations. Finally, after spending much more time than is usually allowed to such a private audience, the Holy Father arose to give us his blessing.

"I bless," said he, "all the works in which you are interested, all those whom you have in mind, all those who help you in your work."

Then he paused a moment and with great earnestness added: "But especially I bless the work for Catholic young people. Continue to work for them. Do all you can for their welfare. These Catholic young people are the hope of the Church. They are the seed from which the Church of the future must spring." The Holy Father paused a moment and appeared to be reflecting deeply. Then he spoke his final words.

"The Catholic young people," he said, "are, indeed, the Church itself, of the future." With these words he made a sign that the audience was at an end, offered us the ring of Peter to kiss, and we left his presence with these last solemn words ringing in our ears.

The Seed of the Future

Our Catholic young people are truly the hope of the Church. They are the seed from which the

Church must spring. Indeed, they are, as the Holy Pontiff said, the Church of the future. What motives these to induce the priest to do all he can for the young. It must be a great sorrow to the heart of every priest to realize that, with all our efforts, such a number of our Catholic young people are lost to the Church. Some time ago, when we were discussing the subject with a very experienced and observant member of the hierarchy, he made this remark:

"If we were to keep in the Church all the Catholic children, even without making any converts, we should soon inherit the land, because the number of children in our Catholic families is so great proportionately to the general increase of the population, that by keeping them all, their numbers would fill the nation." If this be true, then the sad conclusion forces itself upon us that the reason why we do not possess the land is that so many of our Catholic children are lost to the Church. No matter what great efforts for young folk a priest may make, they will not be excessive when we consider the need.

In Our Parish Schools

Naturally, the interest and activity of the priest will be brought to bear in favour of the children in our parish schools. At the present time these schools are surely increasing rapidly in excellence and efficiency. Something more than 2,000,000 children are now under the care of the teaching Sisters. The priest can be of help to our schools in many ways, and not the least important way is by encouraging

and developing vocations to these teaching sisterhoods.

Sisters sometimes complain that while so many parish priests wish more help from the Sisters, not all of them seem to realize the need for cultivating and encouraging vocations. No group of Catholic women, surely, are doing more for the Church than are the Sisters, and none are more burdened and overworked than they. We speak now of all the Sisterhoods.

If we were now to offer our religious communities twice the number of subjects they have, they could, with a little readjustment, find ample work for all this number. Why then should we hesitate to encourage vocations or why should we allow ourselves to fall into an indifferent or careless attitude in this regard, when we know the great and increasing need of more Sisters, and the preciousness of such a vocation to the individual. It ought obviously to be a great aim of the parish priest to help in every way the work of the teaching Sisters, and to offer them as little hindrance as possible. Tact, thoughtfulness, and considerateness are eminently called for in dealing with the parish school. Priests know well by experience how much they can do either for or against the interests of the school. It is well for each parish priest periodically to examine himself on the effect of his attitude and his efforts thereon.

A Precious Multitude

But let us not forget that, while a little more than half of our Catholic children are being educated by

the Sisters, a very large and important minority of them, indeed, nearly as many again, are in the public schools. The souls of the one group are as precious as those of the other. In fact, the Catholic children in the public schools stand even more in need of our prayers, our thought and efforts than do those who study under the safe care of the teaching Sisters.

The heart of the true priest grows sad at the thought that the Catholic children in the public schools are at a double disadvantage. First, they have the obvious misfortune of their lack of the instruction and training of the Sisters. But, besides this, the very families which are least Catholic in their home life and least apt to train their children religiously at home, are the very ones who are most likely to send them to the public schools. The Catholic pupils of the public schools are too often at a disadvantage from a religious standpoint, therefore, both at home and school, while the Catholic children in parish schools have the double advantage of religious teaching at school and a Catholic atmosphere at home.

The Disinherited

It is surely not reasonable for the priest to neglect or disregard the Catholic children in the public schools merely because their parents do not take enough interest in them to send them to Catholic schools. This is not the fault of the child, but of the parents. We should be wrong, indeed, if we did not make every effort to help these children despite their parents'

fault. The Heart of Christ yearns as tenderly and lovingly for the disinherited and neglected child as for the one possessed of every blessing. He is a good shepherd who seeks and finds the sheep that is lost.

A very important element of the priestly character is to be Christlike in this respect also, and to have a special tenderness and solicitude for the straying lambs of the flock of Christ.

It is a very great mistake, then, for priests to disregard and neglect the public schools. Though we have a system of schools of our own, it still remains true that the public schools also belong to us and are as much our responsibility as they are of any citizen. These public schools are educating nearly half of our Catholic children, and they are training most of the other future citizens with whom our Catholic people will have to live in after days. Hence, anything that the priest can do to better the public-school system, to improve its moral atmosphere, to protest against its abuses, to instruct its Catholic pupils, is a service to the Catholic Church as well as to the state at large.

The Problem of Instruction

The problem of the catechetical instruction of the children in these public schools is a very grave one. It is being met to some degree by earnest efforts of the Catholic Instruction Leagues organized in various places. While the ideal would be to have every Catholic child in the Catholic school, and all should strive toward that ideal, still we must face the practical

problem of the need of supplying schools and the still greater one of providing them with teachers. Nearly twice the number of schools and teachers now available would be necessary to take care of all our Catholic children at the present time. Hence, we ought at least to provide catechetical instruction for those of our children who can as yet find no accommodation in our schools.

The solicitude of the priest for the soul of the child will also find an expression in his zeal for the interests of the Catholic home. It is a common remark nowadays that modern conditions seriously impair the home spirit, and injure the home life. The busy priest, as he goes about his parish, must see, time and again, how modern life with its everlasting craving to be abroad, with its commercialized amusements, with its organized sociability and its spirit of unrest, has injured, and even, to an extent, broken up the Catholic home.

Not only do many of the children habitually go out at nights, and find their recreation anywhere but at home, but many parents have the same unhappy spirit of unrest. In fact, the parents are sometimes worse than the children, and any real upbuilding of the home spirit would have to begin with them. The priest ought, therefore, surely, to do everything he can to bring the true Catholic home spirit back into our families. He can do a great deal to this end by the promotion of the right sort of reading, by instructions on the home spirit, and home duties, by talks and

conferences to his church societies, especially those of women, on making the home a happy and holy place, attractive and congenial to the young folk.

Modern Youth

There is much talk nowadays about the wickedness of youth, but in point of fact, youth is probably not very much better nor worse than it always was. It is merely reacting to new conditions which are less favourable to goodness and innocence than the conditions of former days. Instead of yielding to the modern influences which tend to break up the home, and taking it as a matter of course that homes are done for, the priest, for the sake of the young people, will surely wish to do all he can to make Catholic homes truly Catholic and, by encouraging good pictures, good reading, and the right sort of companionship and amusements at home, will help the children to grow up good Catholics.

Many parish priests complain that it is increasingly difficult to keep up the young people's societies in the parish, and this also is a symptom which results from conditions of our modern life. In the old days, meetings of church societies were an event in the week. People had very little else to do in the evening and they were glad to come together for a society's session. Nowadays there are so many uses for every moment that the young folk, and older ones, too, excuse themselves from going to religious meetings because they have so many other calls on their leisure.

The vast multiplication of amusements, the many ways of spending time, which modern invention has provided, the radio, the moving pictures, automobiles, and all the social functions that keep young folk in a merry whirl, are so many reasons for the difficulty of keeping up parish societies.

The Need of Leaders

Then, too, we have not yet learned how to develop leaders among our young people who will come forward and take charge themselves of their own societies. The priest, with so many other calls on his time, finds it impossible to give the energy and interest to each society which is required for its success. We can see no other solution of this problem than either the employment of paid workers or the training of the young people to manage the society for themselves.

This latter requires a good deal of tact, and self-sacrifice on the part of the priest. He is so used to deciding everything for himself, doing everything for himself, being the principal figure in all church activities, that it is hard for him to give the young people sufficient leeway; and they will never do the work unless they have freedom enough to make them feel that they are not mere automatons, but are really in charge of the activities.

Stimulating Their Ambitions

Another important part of the priest's duty toward his young people is to encourage and stimulate them to have noble, hopeful ambitions, and high ideals.

Give a boy or girl confidence and expectation of becoming something worth while, and that boy or girl will work more intensely and achieve more throughout the whole course of life. It has been noticed that there is sometimes a distinct lack of ambition and aspiration in our young folk. Catholics are too often content to be underlings, too often satisfied with a very mediocre share of achievement and success, when they are capable of much better things.

Considering the number of our Catholic people, we have not near enough distinguished and eminent scholars, doctors, lawyers, and authors. It is said that, taking the country as a whole, only about one out of ten of the staffs of our Catholic hospitals are Catholics. The rest are Protestants or Jews, or men of no religious affiliation.

The number of eminent writers in the country who are Catholics is far below the numerical proportion of our people.

Not One in Five

We have in the United States some twenty million Catholics, that is to say, that about one out of every five of our citizens is a Catholic. Yet not one in five of the effective writers, of the noted authors, of the men and women who are truly serving the public with their pens, is Catholic.

This relative inferiority does not spring surely from any lack of talent, for our Catholic young people can compare in this respect with the young people of

any other denomination. It seems to come from a lack of ambition, of a definite purpose, and high resolve, and these things the priest can very effectively foster by his own attitude toward the young folk, as well as by his exhortations and suggestions.

There is no other time in life in which encouragement and good suggestions are so fruitful as they are in youth. We have already reflected that those men and women who have got to a more advanced stage in their career can no longer be changed very much by advice or exhortation. They have chosen their path and struck their pace and nothing that we can do will much increase or diminish their speed or progress. But boys and girls, young men and young women, are usually without experience and without achievement. If you encourage them and help them, then they may prove capable of rendering precious services where they might never have found themselves without help.

The Service of Eminence

We have used a number of times and in various places a phrase, "the service of eminence," by which we have tried to indicate what seems a great need of our time. The "service of eminence" is, of course, that service which any individual renders by becoming excellent in the work which she or he has undertaken. This service does not require great talents nor extraordinary competence, but it does demand that a person should tower above others by industry, fidelity, efficiency in the chosen work.

If we were to explain to our young people unwearyingly that by achieving this service of eminence they can do more good, gain more merit, and confer more honour on the Church than scores of individuals who are satisfied with mere mediocrity, we should be doing a great service. The more we get them to aspire after the service of eminence and to be willing to pay the price of effort, study, practice, to achieve it, the more we shall benefit our young folk and all those about them.

Mobilizing Parish Forces

Surely, the parish priest should also mobilize all the forces of his parish which can work in favour of the young people. His own labours are necessarily limited and his strength may already be overtaxed. But in the parish he will find some group or circle of individuals who can help the young people if he will lead them and encourage them in this work. The ideal parish will be a great family in which the older help the young, and those who are better off assist those who are not so fortunate in worldly goods, in education and in other advantages.

Movements like those of the Big Brothers and Big Sisters, though they may sometimes be a bit unwise in their methods, have a strong foundation of excellence and a real reason for existence. The priest may well organize in his parish a group of men to act as big brothers for the boys of the parish, and of women to serve as big sisters for the girls of the parish.

These workers can secure opportunities for the young folk, give them good advice and encourage them to make the most of their talents and advantages.

As in many other aspects of parish organization, there are vast possibilities in this, which we have up to now scarcely appreciated. Within our present limits it is possible only to touch on these things and we leave to the individual priest the further development of these ideas. The book *Social Organization in Parishes,* published some years ago by the writer, gives many suggestions.

Finding Their Lifework

Finally, consider the work of the priest in helping his young people to choose their way of life and to decide on their vocation. We have already touched on this subject in speaking of the parish schools, but it deserves a great deal more emphasis. Not only vocations to the sisterhoods, but vocations to the priesthood, to the brotherhoods, and to the other phases of the religious life, should receive very sympathetic and careful attention from the priest.

It is he who is the official spiritual adviser and director of his people and he ought to be expert in discovering the signs of a vocation and unwearying in encouraging his young people to choose wisely their way of life and to discover God's will in their regard. This subject of the development of vocations is a great and fruitful theme for reflection and for good resolve on the part of every priest.

To sum up, then, the priest who is truly Christ-like, who is really "another Christ" in his zeal, will leave no means untried to help and save the young folk of his flock. Indeed, his prayers and his thoughts will go beyond the boundaries of his parish and he will yearn, as Christ yearned, to seek and to save the sheep that are lost and to bring to all young folk the saving faith of Christ. He has the means at his hand for doing all that God wills in this regard. For He, when He desires the end, will always show the way, and give the necessary means. Let us all pray, for ourselves and other priests, for the gift of a deep, tender, active, and intelligent interest in, and zeal for, our young people. We shall thus be accomplishing a great duty and answering an ardent desire of the Heart of Christ.

XXIII. THE PRIEST AND THE MISSIONS

THE division of the Church into parishes, over each of which a priest is given charge and care, has many beneficial consequences. It makes the priest's effort definite and concise and gives all the faithful a claim on the services of some minister of God. Yet, the system, like all things human, is not without its disadvantages. The very interest of the priest in his own parish and his sense of personal responsibility for his own little corner of the great vineyard of Christ has a tendency to make him somewhat forgetful of the vast fields which stretch outside.

Ultraparochialism

We hear a great deal nowadays about ultraparochialism and about the difficulty of getting some parish priests to cooperate with wider movements and to do their share in forwarding the general interests of the Church. In fact, every priest in a parish owes it to himself, no less than to the interests of the Church in general, deliberately to rise above the immediate cares of his parish and to send his thoughts and interests beyond the parish boundaries.

If he allows himself to be wrapped up in parish interests alone, those very interests will suffer, because the priest will be guilty of what we might call an extended egotism. Because he confines his whole thought and care to his own little neighbourhood and

to the affairs of his own charge, his mind will grow narrower and his heart small even for the members of his own parish.

The Great Reward

Wider charity and interest on the part of the priest, who, without neglecting his own work, takes an interest in the activities beyond his parish, brings, on the other hand, a real blessing, both spiritual and temporal. Spiritually he receives the more merit for his generous cooperation, his extraparochial activities, because this is a work of supererogation, something that he does over and above his actual duty, without, at the same time, neglecting that duty itself. The members of his parish are likewise edified and interested in the priest's work all the more, when they see he has a truly Catholic spirit. Their own generosity and zeal take fire from his example and they become better parishoners, because they become more loyal and interested in the general work of the Church.

These are cogent reasons which will move the alert and intelligent parish priest to give at least a bit of his time, interest, and attention, with deliberate purpose, to extraparochial activities. He will not neglect his own principal duty and charge, the administration of his parish and the spiritual care of his people. But he will lend a willing hand to the best and most worthy of the activities which appeal to him from outside his parish limits.

Brothers in Christ

Now, there are very few departments of Catholic action which ought to make so moving an appeal to the parish priest as the help of the missions, both home and foreign. All the arguments that we use to enlist the cooperation of the faithful in missionary work should have a double appeal to the heart of the priest. Our vocation is to save souls, to cooperate with the Heart of Christ in this most noble and most necessary of all works, the one activity, indeed, which was great enough and important enough to bring a God from heaven to become Flesh and dwell among us.

Every human soul is very precious in the eyes of God, in the eyes of Christ, and so it should be in the eyes of the priest, that "other Christ," who takes his place among men. What matters it to us that some of these souls are to be found in bodies of a red or yellow hue, in lands far distant from our own, with many customs and ideas so different from ours. Being souls, made to the image and likeness of God and redeemed with the Precious Blood of Christ, they all must be the object of our priestly desire and solicitude.

If, through the limitations of human weakness, we can actually minister only to a very few, at least in thought, in prayer, and where possible in action, our charity ought to extend to huge multitudes of these souls, and we should wish to influence as many as possible to recognize and follow the way of salvation.

Expansive Charity

While, therefore, the priest is chiefly occupied by the cares of his parish, and by his ministry to the souls given to his care, still his prayers, his thoughts, his desires, ought to embrace a far larger multitude. His sympathy and his brotherly kindness should go forth to all priests, wherever they are working, and particularly to those who toil amid discouragements and hardships in the mission fields.

The Church is one great body of which the head is Christ and whereof we all are members. Divine Providence puts some priests in pleasant places, where the harvest is rich and easy of reaping. He gives them kindly and generous congregations in the midst of a Catholic population, where all things are prosperous and where the fruits of the priestly ministry are most consoling. Other priests He sets to till unfertile and barren ground, in the midst of discouragements and sorrows, surrounded by hardships and without even the consolation of the friendship and helping ministries of other priests.

The Golden Rule

The Golden Rule was given by our Lord as a standard of conduct, to us as well as to other men. Suppose that we were in a lonely, poor mission, whether at home or abroad, labouring with very little apparent fruit. How should we feel if we received little or no help from our brother priests who were themselves surrounded by favourable circumstances

and living in the midst of plenty? The Golden Rule bids us in the name of our Lord, to do for those other priests who are so circumstanced what we should wish them to do for us, if the circumstances were reversed.

All the moving words which our Lord uttered concerning brotherly charity were surely spoken in a special manner to priests: "Little children," He said, "love one another. As I have loved you, do you also love one another. By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another." Uttering these words to us, our Lord points to the home and foreign missions, to the priests who are labouring there, to the Sisters and Brothers who are giving their lives in patient and sometimes discouraging toil for the conversion and salvation of the nations.

Surely no parish priest who has the slightest opportunity of helping the missions can be deaf to those words. Some of our parishes overflow with resources and opportunities for aiding the missions. The people are many and well-to-do. The crumbs which fall from their tables would endow the work of more than one missionary in pagan lands. What they merely waste out of their abundance, would relieve the care and want of not a few priests, Sisters, and Brothers on the foreign missions.

The People Need Encouragement

The people are willing but thoughtless. They have no appreciation of the vastness of the mission field,

with its thousand million pagans, of the spiritual darkness of the people, of the needs of missionary priests and Sisters. Could they look into some missionaries' homes and see how bare they are in comparison to their own, how poor and wretched their food, how scanty their means, the faithful would be moved to overflowing generosity. But, in the nature of things, they never will come to this realization without the aid of their parish priest.

He it is who ought to lead and direct their generosity to the missions. He ought to mobilize his own parish, over which he has charge and care, so that its generosity may go forth and reap great harvests of souls. The people await his word. They will not act in any great and effective way without his help and inspiration. How eager we ought all to be to give that help and inspiration to our people, so that our parish may stand out over all neighbouring parishes, in the eyes of Christ for its generosity to the missions.

No parish priest ever could succeed, no matter how hard he tried, in being too generous to the missions. We cannot outdo God in generosity, and even though a parish priest should persuade his parishioners to be so lavish in their gifts to the mission fields that, humanly speaking, it would seem that their own parish must suffer, still that parish not only would not miss the generous gifts to the missions, but it would actually flourish the more, and feel in all its activities, the moving grace of God to a far greater degree than if it had stinted in its mission gifts. Oh for the

day when all our well-established parish priests, whose lives are led in prosperous parishes, shall vie with each other and outdo themselves in generous support of the missions. When that time comes the Kingdom of God in the mission fields will go forward by leaps and bounds.

Adopting a Missionary

Would it not be well for every parish priest to take up that excellent way of helping the missions which we have often suggested to our parish societies and institutions; namely, to adopt a missionary or a mission and to concentrate the efforts of his parish in helping some particular mission field, or some special worker in that field? This may well be done over and above the ordinary mission activities of the parish.

Let us continue, indeed, to support and develop the work of the Propagation of the Faith, to the utmost. Let us encourage the other deserving mission societies. But besides, and as a special work of zeal, let the parish priest choose, with the help of the Propagation of the Faith and the other mission societies, some particular missionary, with whom he will correspond, or will have his parish societies correspond, whose needs he will try to supply, in whose work he will take an interest and whose loneliness and discouragement he will strive to solace. Such a plan would result in an increase of mission zeal.

Because what we do in particular, for a special

individual, is so much more interesting and gives us so much more stimulus than working merely for a general cause. If the parish priest himself has not time to carry on a correspondence, he can get some of his parishoners to write in his name, and surely his own work will be much more blessed and his own spiritual life will flow deeper because he is exercising this act of charity toward his missionary friend.

The two great ways in which the parish priest can help the missions are, of course, by prayer and effort. If you pray a great deal yourself for your fellow priests in the missions and for all missionary workers, it will be easier for you to stir up your people to unite in prayer for the same great intention and in all the exercises of the parish, in the holy hour, in the May devotions, in novenas, in the prayers of the children at school, the refrain of prayers for the missions ought to recur again and again.

If you, yourself, are thoroughly interested in mission work and if your heart often goes out to those thousands of faithful soldiers of Christ in mission lands, then you will speak movingly to your people and they will catch fire from your spirit of prayer to pray themselves most fervently for mission work and mission workers. Their thoughts will go out to the great throngs of the pagan peoples or to the non-Catholics in our own land, with sympathy and tenderness. They will love you the more, and listen the more to your own suggestions, will see in you more clearly the lineaments of Christ, and appreciate to a greater de-

gree your Christlike spirit, because you are generous and kind and love the mission work.

The Needful Grace

Vast riches of God's grace are needed to achieve the difficult task of winning hearts and souls to the Church of Christ in the missions. The home missions, where priests are labouring amid sparse populations, endeavouring to counteract bigotry, prejudice, and the errors and lies of the Church's enemies, offer a difficult field, which must be conquered and made fertile by many prayers. The same spirit of worldliness and indifference which makes it difficult sometimes to keep our own people faithful and true, makes it doubly difficult to convert non-Catholics to a faith so supernatural as ours, and so exacting in its requirements of personal piety and fidelity.

The pagan nations are, in fact, less difficult to convert at the present time than non-Catholic Christians. Yet, even there what hardships, loneliness, difficulties, what resistance on the part of the world, the flesh, and the devil, the missionary has to overcome. Every priest and Brother and Sister on the missions needs endless prayer.

The Wants of the Missions

When we come to speak of the material aid to the missions, here again the field is quite limitless. It is true that the personal needs of the priests, Sisters, and Brothers, have bounds, and they can live much

more cheaply in pagan lands than they could in our own. But the swarming populations need schools, churches, chapels, hospitals, dispensaries. They need training schools for catechists and they need, too, the funds to pay the salaries of these catechists, trifling salaries it is true, but multiplied many times by the large number of catechists who are required.

Generally speaking, the greater the material resources of the mission, the more work can be done. Put yourself in imagination in a mission among the swarming populations of China. A million souls are within the reach of your missionary ministrations, and in great part they are simple, impressionable souls, good material for converts. They will come into the Church, a whole village at a time, if they are properly encouraged and you will be delighted to find that when they do become Catholics, they will suddenly flower out into devotion and fervour that might put to shame many parishes of long standing. Yet, what must you do in order to convert these people?

A Place for Home and School

First of all you must have a place to live in, which is sufficiently comfortable and healthful and where you can establish a school and, if possible, a dispensary and give aid to the converts who need help. This requires the expenditure of money. Then, when your catechists are trained, you must send them into the villages, perhaps a man and his wife together, and the more catechists, the more funds you will need. A

couple of them may stay in a village for a year and at the end of that time they will have given instructions in the fundamentals of our religion to all the people, so that most of the village, perhaps all, are ready for baptism.

But this support of the catechists again requires funds.

The Medical Mission Workers

Throngs of the people will come to you for medical aid as well as for spiritual help and the more money and supplies you have, the better dispensary you can provide. If you have funds enough you may bring a doctor to help you and perhaps some Sisters who are skillful in the care of the sick and this will be an immense aid to your mission work. The Protestant medical missions are twenty years ahead of the Catholic ones, and largely because of their abundant funds.

Of the power of medical mission work to help to the spread of the Faith, our missionaries bear eloquent witness. They declare that in many places the pagan folk are very shy of the missionary, and run away when he tries to teach them. But they will walk many miles to get medical aid, and when they have been helped in their bodily distress they will more willingly receive spiritual ministrations. The Catholic Medical Mission Board, with its headquarters in New York, offers an excellent clearing house for medical mission activities, and any priest who wishes to help such a mission as we are imagining in a medical way will find abundant cooperation there.

Then, too, in your imagined mission, the children swarm all about you, and even the pagan children will be glad to come to your Catholic school, but to build schools, to support teachers, requires material means, and the more means you have, the better your schools and the more children you can educate. These children will form Catholic families, or perhaps will develop vocations, in after years. Thus the greater and more abundant supplies of money and of material goods you can secure, the more prosperous your mission can become.

There is no end to the needs of the pagan population, no limit to the field which these thousand million pagans offer to the priest, the Sister, and the Brother, in their mission work. If you aid them abundantly by prayer and material supplies, you will double, treble, multiply indefinitely the efficacy of their ministry.

The Non-Catholic Missions

The non-Catholic people far surpass our Catholic people in their contributions to the missions. Not long since, while traveling in the West, we were approached by a physician whom we had met in Vienna at the eye clinic there. He had been making a tour of the Orient, sent out by the Rockefeller Foundation, and he bemoaned the lack of Catholic hospitals and dispensaries as compared to the number of Protestant mission hospitals and dispensaries.

The Catholic missionaries are often hundreds of

miles away from a hospital or physician and many a life has been sacrificed because of this want of medical facilities. The Catholic Medical Mission Board will be delighted to give suggestions to parish priests as to how their parish may cooperate in meeting this pitiful need.

Christs' Commission

To sum up, then, the missionary work of the Church, both at home and abroad, offers to the parish priest a precious opportunity both for personal merit and holiness and for the effective improvement of his parishioners. Once fill your own soul with missionary zeal and fervour, and interest your people in missionary activities, and the generosity of God will begin to reward you with that hundredfold here, which is a foretaste of the joys hereafter.

The Heart of Christ will love you the more tenderly because He sees your tender pity and compassion for your fellow priests in missionary lands; and you will be carrying out to the utmost of your own personal power those solemn words of His which He addressed to us all at the moment when His visible presence left this earth until Judgment Day:

"And seeing Him they adored: but some doubted,

"And Jesus coming, spoke to them, saying: All power is given to Me in heaven and in earth.

"Going therefore, teach ye all nations: baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world." (Matt. xxviii. 17–20.)

XXIV. THE INTERIOR LIFE OF THE PRIEST

FEW passages in the sublime Epistles of St. Paul are more significant to the priest than that in which the valiant Apostle begs the prayers of the faithful for his own perseverance and salvation, and where he expresses that fear of, or rather, should we say, that cautious provision against, becoming himself a castaway, even after he had so mightily preached salvation to other men. His words bring distinctly before us the truth that while the priest has as his official duty to save the souls of others, his chief personal concern is still to save his own. It is possible, as we may gather from St. Paul's words, for him to be much more effective in promoting the salvation of other men than in securing his own inward perfection.

The Priest's Salvation

It is true, as we have often heard said, that our efficiency in saving souls and helping others, requires that we shall ourselves have a spirit of piety. Yet, the outward works of the ministry may be carried on with great benefit to other people, because they are channels of divine grace, and at the same time an individual priest may still lack much of carrying out in practice the things which he teaches to others. The concern of supreme importance to the priest, as to every other man, is not his outward activity, but his inner life.

It is in the sanctuary of his own heart and soul that his own salvation is worked out, and his perfec-

tion accomplished. The words of Our Lord, "What will it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his soul" applies to him as an individual, as it applies to all other individuals who are brought into this world. "The kingdom of God is within you," has as full a meaning for him as for any other follower of Christ.

Of Supreme Importance

While, therefore, the priest is in duty bound to perfect himself in his outward ministry, his supreme concern ought to be to live an interior life worthy of "another Christ." It is most profitable for us, from time to time, to renew the exercises which ought to be part of every retreat, to investigate our own inward self and see what manner of life we lead in the hidden sanctuary within us. What we call the inward life is chiefly the life of the intelligence, the memory, and the will.

This may seem a very plain and obvious statement, yet the most obvious things must be examined and realized from time to time, lest they escape notice because of their very obviousness. Our feelings, as reported to us by consciousness, influence to a certain degree the life of intelligence and will, but the real substance of our inward existence is to be found in the faculty of our memory and intelligence, dealing with truth, and in our free will, constantly choosing and thus directing the trend of our lives.

The Spiritual Conflict

Since the life of man is a warfare, and since we have all to struggle for an eternal crown, our interior life has always in it elements of conflict. On the one hand, the voice of conscience, our natural reason, keeps telling us of the will of God and encouraging us to mount higher in His love and service.

On the other hand, all the various obstacles within and without us tend to pull us down and draw us away from the more excellent service of God. Like everyone else in the world, we have within us those seven great tendencies which, if yielded to, would express themselves in the seven deadly sins, but which, subdued and conquered for the love of God, constantly exercise us in the contrary virtues.

While, therefore, we encourage other people to lead holy and good lives, to increase in the love of God and in fidelity and service, we ourselves, in order to be good priests, are obliged constantly to carry on the same warfare as they, and to lead an interior life in conformity to the good principles which we preach to them.

It is true that we have far greater aids than they—special graces, extraordinary opportunities of serving God, constant reminders of His presence and goodness—, but on the other hand, it is also true that we are not preached to as much as they, nor admonished nor encouraged from without, so much as are the lay folk whose spiritual pastors constantly preach to them and exhort them.

Faith, Hope, and Charity

With most priests it is not a question of leading an interior life or not, it is rather a question as to how intense, earnest, and sublime that interior life shall be. The main current, as we may say, of our inward and supernatural existence consists in the exercise of the virtues of faith, hope, and charity, the latter toward both God and toward our neighbour for the sake of God. We have said something of each of these virtues in relation to the life of the priest.

Suffice it to recall that the oftener we renew and intensify our acts of faith, of hope, and of love, the deeper and purer and stronger the life of our soul will become. These are the great theological virtues, the fundamental virtues of the soul's life, by which we lay hold of God and possess Him more and more. The priest who accustoms himself, to a more and more intense degree, to make acts of belief in God and hope in Him and love of His Divine Majesty and of all men for the sake of God, grows constantly in his inward life.

Learning From Experience

We know quite well by experience what things help the intensity and earnestness of our faith and what things hinder. Meditation, good reading, prayer, holy conversation, the company of those who are devout and good, the attentive recitation of the office, the careful and well-prepared saying of Mass, all these things are exercises in faith and when right-

ly used, they deepen and strengthen the inward life of the priest, day by day. The habitual remembrance of the presence of God, is, of course, one of the very greatest of all means of intensifying our inward life.

This habitual thought of God brings Him near to us as a most dear friend. Many, many times during the day, without being fully conscious perhaps of what we are doing, we enter into conversation with God. If there is anything pleasant that occurs, we instinctively thank Him. If there is any danger threatened, we turn to Him as swift and spontaneous an appeal for help as that of the little child to his mother. If any sorrow comes, before we are quite aware of what we are doing, our heart is resting with God, seeking comfort, or at least resignation, from Him. Even our faults remind us to make a swift act of sorrow and atonement to God and an appeal to Him to help us amend what is amiss.

Union With God

When a priest has this union with God, which comes from such an habitual love of Him, it may indeed be impossible for him to go back over the day and calculate how many times he has thought of God. He is really thinking of Him constantly. God comes into his mind at the moment of waking, and to Him are offered all the thoughts, words, and deeds of the day, and they are paid to Him one by one as they come. Entering the church to say Mass, the priest comes nearer to Him in bodily presence of Whom he

has really been thinking from the moment of his waking.

Through the course of the Mass he does not so much turn to God as continue to think of Him, but with greater intenseness and self-consecration. The changing events of the day do not distract him, but rather keep continually flashing before him, in different ways and different forms, the thought of God. He greets every event of the day, pleasant or painful, as a messenger from God, and it is welcome for the sake of Him Who sends it.

The various persons who try his patience or seek his service during the day are so many living images of God, invested, not with the vexatious imperfections of their humanity, but with a certain beauty of His divinity. The priest who lives in this union with God reverences in each one the dwelling presence of God in some such manner, (though of course, not literally) as he reverences the Sacred Host in the monstrance or ciborium, without much regard as to whether the monstrance is of brass or precious metal, plain or adorned with jewels. His work and his recreations are all performed in the presence of God, and he tries to make them all worthy of His sight. Such a union with God results in an inner life of fervour and holiness.

We See By Faith

To the priest, who is "another Christ," this priceless habit of walking in the presence of God is easier

than to other men. He carries always with him, so to say, the person of Christ. Wherever he goes, Christ goes beside him. As the men on the street lift their hats to the priest, all they know about him in many instances is, that he is a priest. It is not his personal qualities that they reverence, but rather the person of Christ Whom he represents.

When he visits the sick, he carries to them, not his own power of consolation and of help, but the Divine power. When he speaks to them, his words are uttered not in his own name, but in the name of his Master. When the Apostles walked along the highways of Judea, or went out into the desert to pray, Christ was in the midst of them. They had no difficulty in practicing the remembrance of the presence of God, nor in praying to His Divine Majesty, because God was always with them in the Person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, made man.

The priest has a similar blessing. With the eyes of faith, though not with the eyes of the flesh, he sees constantly beside him, within him, above him, Jesus Christ, the eternal High Priest. He bears within his soul the sacerdotal character, to us mysterious, to the angels wonderful and beautiful, that substantial seal which makes him "another Christ." If, therefore, he remembers these things and stirs up a vivid faith in them, Jesus will always be with him in realization, as in truth, in conversation and friendship, as in essential consecration.

A Childlike Trust

What we have said of faith, is true of hope also. The exercise of the presence of God, so easy to the priest, makes hope constantly more vivid. With what great confidence ought the priest, of all men, expect the aid and favour of Him with Whom he is so closely united, to Whom he has consecrated not only his services, but his whole being. But the inward life of the priest will be more and more truly fervent, and holy in proportion as the virtue of hope springs frequently into action.

Thus, confidence and high courage, childlike trust in God, eager anticipation of His aid and of His great rewards, ought to be native to the soul of the priest. Our very weakness is a reason for a great hope. Since God has chosen us for a task entirely beyond the power of man, He will the more surely support and sustain us in what we have undertaken, and will bring us to His reward, exceedingly great, no other than His own Divine Self! Our inward life with God ought to consist in part of acts of high confidence, of perfect trust, of loyal hope. We ought to tell Him many times each day how utterly we distrust our own weakness, how utterly we confide in His goodness, power, and compassion.

The Greatest is Charity

The queen of all virtues is charity, and from the strength of our faith and the ardour of our hope, our charity will be increased in us. Let us recall the rea-

son given by St. Teresa of Avila, why it is difficult for us to love God—namely, that His nature is so different from ours. We are of the earth earthly. All our impressions come through our senses. Our knowledge of spiritual things has to be grasped with difficulty through our intelligence only.

Our imagination can make no adequate image of God, our senses can tell us nothing directly of His divine substance. The things about us are real to us from experience. Faith and reason alone assure us of the presence and being of God. In heaven we shall see Him face to face, but now only through a glass, darkly. It is difficult for us, therefore, often and patiently to strive to realize His goodness and His own divine attributes, and to make acts of love which are based on faith and hope.

Self-Love

The greatest obstacle to the love of God, as we all know, is the ill-ordered love of self. Not only does the heaviness of our body pull us down, and the dullness of our intelligence deter us, but the world, the flesh, and the devil attract every man who reaches the age of reason, seeking to turn him away from God. Add to this that pride, anger, covetousness, gluttony, lust, envy, and sloth, offer temptations to every human being, against which he must struggle, but which he never can completely overcome, save by a special gift of God.

Temptations from within and without forever try us, for our own good and our own salvation. But of all temptations, excessive self-love is of the most dangerous; hence, besides cultivating this interior life of faith, hope, and charity, we must likewise practice mortifications. We all know that the word "mortification" means "doing to death," but perhaps we seldom realize the singular appropriateness of that word.

When we practice what we call "mortifications," their purpose is to do to death some excessive inclination. We mortify pride to do to death the undue swellings of personal esteem which impair the service and the love of God. We mortify, or do to death, covetousness, so as to keep our use and desire of material possessions in leash, that these may be a help and not a hindrance to the love of God.

So, also, with all the other unruly tendencies of our nature we have to practice deliberate acts of self-discipline, self-conquest, self-denial, in order to "do to death" what is excessive and rebellious in us. Hence, our interior life will depend to a great extent on our willingness to mortify ourselves; that is, to do to death the things in us which go against the Spirit of Divine Love.

Converse With God

A little reflection will bring to the priest many other helpful thoughts concerning his interior life. The practice of the presence of God will result in the habit of childlike and confiding prayer to Him. We shall tell Him all our needs, trials, and difficulties

and shall seek His aid continually by habitually lifting up our heart to Him. Prayer can do all things.

Surely it was said with special meaning to the priest: "Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you." For it is his special office to intercede with God for himself and for all the people and when he prays, the Heart of Christ hears the prayers of His beloved Church. This same practice of familiar converse with God and the constant sense of His presence will help us more and more to purify our intention to act sincerely and singly for the love of God in all things, and this is the inner secret of sanctity.

Their Whole Achievement

God has multiplied instances in His Church of saints who did nothing exteriorly, whose whole life was an interior life, beautiful and holy, but invisible to human eyes. The latest and one of the most brilliant instances of this truth is the career of the Little Flower of Jesus, St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face. This charming and simple soul early learned from the heart of Christ the secret of sanctity which consists in great love, and the performance of many little acts as perfectly as possible from the motive of love.

Though her life was so different from the life of the priest, exteriorly, inwardly her sanctity was based on the same principles as those on which priestly sanctity must be grounded. She believed firmly, she

hoped ardently, she loved consumingly. The motive of her least action was a great love, and so she became very holy. Precisely the same might be said about St. Paul, about St. Francis Xavier, about the greatest and most effective of priests. No matter what their exterior life may have been, their holiness depended on the intention of their heart.

The Will of God

It is hardly needful to point out that such a walking in the presence of God will result in a constant effort to do His holy Will, which is expressed in the moment's duty presented us by His Divine Providence. Hour by hour, and day by day, the work of the priest unrolls before him, marked in every instant by the imprint of the Providence of God.

Just as Jesus Christ Himself declared that in the head of the book it was written of Him that He should do God's will, so also may the priest repeat this sublime saying himself, as "another Christ." To do God's Will, to accomplish the duty of the moment faithfully and with a pure love of God, to go on patiently, through pleasure and sorrow, through consolation and pain, always doing the moment's work motived by the pure love of God, this is his calling. And this constant fidelity is the fruit of inward faith and hope and love, of the realization of the presence of God and of devotion to His holy Will.

Ejaculations

Finally, let us emphasize again in this connection the power and efficacy of ejaculatory prayers to refresh the soul of the priest and enkindle the fire of his love. It requires but a moment to send one of these fiery messages of love to the Heart of Christ Who is always so near to us and that Sacred Heart, thus sweetly wounded with love, will return a yet greater flame into the heart of the priest. A multitude of ejaculatory prayers have now been indulgenced by the Church and are familiar to every priest. While we teach these to the people, let us not fail ourselves to make abundant use of them, enriching our own souls while we strive to help the souls of other men.

A Fruitful Theme

This theme of the interior life of the priest is so rich and beautiful that one might long dwell upon it, fruitfully. Even these few thoughts will arouse many other reflections in the minds of devoted priests. What we have said is in accordance with the sublime doctrine of St. Francis de Sales, of the sainted Curé d'Ars, the special patron of priests, and of many others who have written on priestly holiness.

Let us end with this one word, that if the interior life of the priest is all that it should be, then his sacerdotal efficacy, his personal sanctity, and his helpfulness to other men are assured. But if this inner life be wanting, then he can be but sounding brass and

tinkling cymbals, calling others, it may be, to the love and service of God by the sound of his words, but himself hard and cold.

XXV. THE PRIEST'S AMBITIONS

OF many good English words, this one, "ambition" has both a happy and an evil significance. One must confess that its origin is dubious, for, as everyone knows, it comes from the Latin term *ambitio,* which means to go about and seek votes as the Roman candidates used to do. From this ambition of popular favour, the term has come to mean any seeking of excellence. There is a laudable ambition prompted by worthy and noble motives, as well as a base ambition, tainted with selfishness and self-seeking.

Far be it from any priest to cultivate this second, and evil manner of ambition. Ourselves and our lives are solemnly consecrated to Christ. Therefore, it does not become us to strive for anything except His interests, and the interests of His brethren, the souls whom He came to save. But ambition in the better sense, the striving after eminent and noble service, the zeal to develop what is best in us to the highest degree, this is not only a seeming and proper thing for priests, but every priest should be encouraged to the utmost to such a noble aspiration.

Our Boundless Possibilities

It is a truism to say that we have, all of us, almost unlimited capacities for improvement. The very fact that we have been admitted to the priesthood indicates that those responsible for our entrance, saw in us after

mature observation and reflection, sufficient talents and good qualities to justify our being given the responsibilities and duties of a priest. This means that every priest is a picked man, and since the duties of the priesthood are exacting duties, and require especially a certain degree of character, intelligence, and industry, we may assume that every one of us is qualified to render good service to the Lord and to men.

What the quality of that service will be, however, and how much we shall improve day by day, depends very much on our personal and rightful ambition. The honest aspiration to do better and better work in every line, the constant, deliberate effort to improve ourselves, the undiscouraged labour of self-criticism and self-discipline, will inevitably make us more and more efficient, more and more worthy of the task before us, with its unending possibilities.

The Service of Eminence

This steadfast ambition and industry for self-improvement is more precious than talent, or even than genius, in the priesthood. How many men become priests who have fine native talents, but who, for some reason or other, whether out of discouragement or some other cause, never accomplish much, and live and die with their talents unutilized. How many other priests we observe, who with a surprisingly scant natural equipment, by dint of everlasting effort, work themselves into a state of high efficiency, and accom-

plish more in the priesthood than those others who are talented without ambition.

Coining A Phrase

We have coined the phrase "the service of eminence," which applies to the priesthood as well as to the Catholic lay folk. The thought embodied in this phrase, if it be well pondered on and fairly realized, offers a stimulus to priestly ambition. The thought is this, that by developing our powers to the utmost, by taking advantage of the opportunities given us, and doing our work, whatever it be, exceptionally well, we render more service to God and glory to His name, we may give more help to our fellow men, than many others of similar ability who are satisfied with a mere mediocrity, and dawdle along, doing only what is barely sufficient to avoid reproach.

Such service of eminence is possible to every priest. It consists not in possessing extraordinary talents, nor in being able to excel others by reason of one's genius, but rather in being willing to take endless pains to improve, ready to pay the price of hard work and effort in order to do whatever we are doing extraordinarily well.

Degrees of Eminence

It is true that if a man has great talents, exceptional gifts, and adds to them this willingness to take pains and to become eminent in service, he achieves a more shining success than does the man whose talents

are very ordinary. Yet, there is a service of eminence which any priest may find for himself, and which consists in doing ordinary things extraordinarily well. Anyone who becomes eminently competent, even in an humble task, renders this service of which we speak. The luminous comparison put by Shakespeare into the mouth of the melancholy Jacques, applies to the priest, as well as to other men.

"All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players."

The eminence of an actor does not consist in the fact that he is given the part of a king, nor is it lessened by the fact that he takes the part of a beggar. A great actor may be great in the part of a very humble individual and his eminence consists in playing his part exceptionally well.

To recur to our former comparison, St. Francis de Sales was born in high station, was raised to the episcopacy, moved in great society, yet his eminence is due to none of these things, but rather to the fact that he played his part as priest and bishop exceedingly well, for the love of God. The Curé d'Ars was born of very simple parents, lived in an obscure village, died the poor pastor of a simple flock, yet, he rendered to an excellent degree, the service of eminence by playing his part as parish priest so well that the world sought him out in his obscurity.

But the one and the other, the great bishop and the simple parish priest, rendered to God and man the service of eminence, and the secret of their success was

their diligent performance each of his own duties as perfectly as possible, and for the love of God. Generally speaking, the greater is the pure and worthy ambition of the priest to develop all his talents so as to achieve the service of eminence, the greater glory he will give to God, the greater help to his neighbour, the greater sanctity he will achieve himself.

Unwearying Courage

Surely we priests, of all men, are called to this service of eminence because we have as our example and model no other than a God, made man. To be "another Christ," to carry on His ministry and in His name requires and demands the exercise of our utmost industry. A high courage, a weariless effort at eminent service ought to be stirred up in the heart and mind of every priest when he repeats to himself those sublime and astounding words: *"Sacerdos Alter Christus."*

The pure and holy ambition of the priest must extend to various lines of eminent service. His spiritual ambitions ought to be great and generous. It is literally true that every priest is called and destined to be a saint, and while we may say this of every Christian in a certain sense, it is especially true of the priest.

We shall do well to formulate for ourselves a very definite and clear outline of our spiritual ambitions. Indeed, this series of reflections on the ascetical life of the priest is meant to be a help to form such an outline.

While we may sum up the priest's spiritual ambitions in the words "to be as Christlike as possible," still, such a general ambition is too vague to be effective. We ought to aim at bringing before ourselves very definitely the practical details of Christlikeness as they apply to ourselves. What would Christ be and do if He were put in our individual situation? The answer to this question pursued in detail, will give us the outlines of our spiritual ambition.

What is Holiness?

Priests, like all other persons, may suffer from misconceptions in their idea of spiritual perfection, although, of course, the priest, being so much better instructed than the faithful, can more readily guard against such misconceptions. Yet, some priests in their seminary days conceive an idea of priestly sanctity which is not practicable for themselves, and by reason of this unconscious misconception, they are discouraged in seeking after the holiness they might achieve.

The heart of holiness is the love of God, and of one's neighbour for the sake of God. Therefore, every priest ought to have as his master motive a consuming ambition to love God more and more, and to love the human beings about him more and more, for the sake of God.

At Any Time

We may here recall to mind all that we have said about the charity of the priest, adding that any priest

can begin at any time, with the assurance of God's grace and help, to become eminently a lover of God and of man. "If you wish to love God, you do love Him," says St. Augustine in an often-quoted passage. By increasing our ambition to love God, concentrating our efforts to increase in His love, frequently repeating acts of the love of God with courage and perseverance, we may go forward day by day, and even hour by hour, growing like a giant in our inward sincere charity.

Above all things, this spiritual ambition is necessary for the priest. He should never allow himself to lose the first youthful glow of enthusiasm to become very holy and very Christlike. What he dreamed in the seminary about leading a saintly life in the midst of the world, in the priesthood, he should manfully carry out in the prosaic surroundings of his everyday life. A real eagerness to become more and more holy is priceless to the priest. On the other hand, he who gives up the struggle and is satisfied with mediocre spiritual achievements, will never be worthy of that noble name of *Alter Christus*.

An Intellectual Ambition

No less ought the priest in justice to his calling, maintain an intellectual ambition. It is surely not necessary to argue with priests to convince them that they should be among the most intelligent, well-informed, open-minded, and cultured men in their communities. The great traditions of the Church demand

this of us. The slurs cast upon us by non-Catholics make it incumbent upon us to let shine before the world the light not only of a holy, but also of a cultured life. Christ is the wisdom of the Father Incarnate, and the priest should be a model of culture and high-mindedness.

Even the busiest priest must find time, or make time for continuing his studies. If all priests were to give up the moments spent in useless or merely recreational reading and were to take up courses which would be just as recreational and interesting, but would carry forward their intellectual life, the whole mental status of the priesthood would be elevated. We, like everyone else, have to guard against the flow of cheap periodical literature which pours in upon us from every side. To dip into the best of these publications, now and then so as to keep abreast of the times, and so as to realize what the people are reading is good. But to make them our mental food is dissipating to the mind, and is a sin against intellectual ambition.

It is frequently said that our Catholic people as a whole suffer from a lack of culture. Who is to lead them to the wellsprings of culture, save the priest, and how can the priest persuade the people to enter into their Catholic heritage, to appreciate Catholic culture, unless he himself has sincere intellectual ambitions?

The Priest as Preacher

Need we say that the priest ought also to have the

ambition to develop to the utmost his personal talents of preaching and writing? To preach is part of the priestly ministry. Faith comes chiefly by hearing, and we are commissioned to go forth and teach all nations. Some men have by nature a fine talent in speaking, but almost any priest, by constant diligence and training, can arrive at a point where he will be a good, interesting speaker. Weak voices may be cultivated by perservering practice. A ready power of expression comes from exercise. Here, again, it is often better to have moderate talents with common sense and industry, than to be a very fluent speaker and not to take any pains.

The Time to be Brief

Sir Bulwer Lytton, in one of his prefaces, tells of a man who gave a long and rambling discourse. "Why in the world did you speak at such length?" Inquired a friend. "Because." answered the tedious speaker, "I did not have time to be brief." If he had taken more time in preparing his remarks, he could have dispatched the subject more expeditiously. In the same way natural facility, unbridled by self-discipline, too often tortures the hearers.

Of course, the ambition of the priest in preparing his sermons ought not to be to draw down popular praise on himself, but to preach the word of God. This is true of all our ambitions. They ought never to find their center of gravity in ourselves, but in Christ. To be "another Christ" in the pulpit is to preach, as Christ did, so as to be understood by the people. Yet,

it requires labour and care to find the apt illustrations, to make one's thought clear to simple minds as He did, to move the heart while teaching the mind.

"While you are preaching," says St. Jerome, (*Ep. LII ad Nepotianum,* 8) "seek not to win the admiration of the people, but their sighs of sorrow. Let the tears of your hearers be your praise. The preaching of a priest ought to be prepared by the reading of the Scriptures. Be not a mere declaimer, talking away without sense, but be skilled in the mysteries of Faith, and most learned in the things of God."

The Priest's Writings

This same principle holds true in regard to the priest's writings. Considering the training they receive, the information they possess, and the strong incentive they have for writing, the number of priests who are effective authors is far too small. Here, again, who of us do not know of men who possess fine powers of thought and expression, and yet, for one reason or another, never utilize them in print.

In individual cases we must leave each man to judge for himself, and it would be wrong to criticise where we do not know all the circumstances, but one may say in general that every priest who has the power and opportunity to write, ought to cultivate in himself a noble ambition to do his utmost with the pen for the glory of God and the good of souls. No one need be afraid that the number of priest writers will become too great, for production is very competently regulated by consumption; as soon as there are too

many priests who write, they will be made aware of this fact by the difficulty of getting into print.

Nor need the priest hang back from publication through fear that to appear in print may hurt his humility. On the contrary, his humility will be likely to grow with publication, for no one knows his own limitations until he tries the craft of authorship.

To the Corners of the Earth

As to the good which may be done through the printed word, it is almost boundless and very inspiring. The English tongue is the most widely spread of any Christian speech, and the whole world lies before the priest who can write. Develop this talent, and you will find your influence reaching out literally to the four corners of the earth. You will receive messages and letters from near and far, sufficient to indicate to you the Christlike efficacy of the printed word when it is bent toward doing good.

After a time, the responses to your former writings will urge you forward to new efforts. While you can teach hundreds with your voice and thousands perhaps over the great, new medium of the radio, you can teach hundreds of thousands, and for years to come, by the printed word. A Christlike ambition, therefore, to help others by writing ought to find a place in every priest whom God has gifted with the power of self-expression.

We have space only to mention here the ambition which the priest should have for leadership, the right

sort of leadership, the earnest desire to influence his people for good and to be a worthy citizen, and of the priest's ambition for character development for the harmonious cultivation of his own activities, so as to be more like to Christ the perfect Man. We must hurry on to speak of some obstacles to these worthy priestly ambitions.

Obstacles to Ambition

Standing foremost among these obstacles, who cannot see the dismal phantom of discouragement? Of all obstacles in the spiritual life of priests, as of most people, discouragement is among the worst. So long as a man keeps his courage, looks forward to succeeding, maintains a hopeful, high-hearted confidence, he will keep trying and advancing despite all obstacles, and he will eventually succeed. But whenever discouragement secures a hold, then spiritual or intellectual ambition sinks and dies.

In the humdrum routine of every day, and after the experience of repeated failures, it is, indeed, extremely difficult for the priest, or for any man, to keep up his courage. Yet, someone has defined courage as "a dogged determination to keep on" and any man who has this determination will still go forward, and he who goes forward will approach the goal. What is easy to get is usually not worth having. The measure of excellence is commonly the difficulty of achievement, and Almighty God has allowed this principle to enter into the spiritual, as well as the intellectual life.

Hence, unless a priest can keep up his courage, he is doomed to mediocrity, and the very merit we gain often lies not in succeeding, but in struggling, not in triumphing, but in persevering.

The Barrier of Human Respect

Discouragement comes from within us, but there is another obstacle to eminent service which comes from without; to wit, human respect. There is an unhappy but instinctive impulse in human nature to resent that anyone should struggle above the general throng. Critical remarks, which are discouraging in their tendency, ridicule, resentment, all follow the man who is aiming at eminence. This seems a special trial, allowed by God to sift out those who are not sincerely earnest, and to prove the ones who have real courage and good will.

Especially for the young, when they begin to struggle upward, human respect is a sore obstacle. If a man is brave enough to go forward, and to overcome his fear of human respect, while he passes through the no man's land of criticism, his enemies may become his friends, and the criticisms of others may turn to encouragements. During the awkward struggles to achieve eminent service, human respect may be against you. But when you have attained the eminence you aim at, those who have critized the loudest may become your advocates. Have the common sense and the perseverance to disregard whatever people think unless it comes to you with authority, or unless it fits in

with your own reason and common sense. If you cannot withstand human respect, you are not fit for the service of eminence.

The Snare of Sloth

Another great obstacle is sloth. Our human nature suffers from inertia. The easy life appeals to everyone, where there is question of spiritual or intellectual effort. We are a very active people physically, and we may deceive ourselves into the belief that we are not subject to sloth. But the most energetic persons in physical and material ways are sometimes most slothful in the life of the mind and the spirit. To recognize the snare of sloth and to fear it, is a long step toward the service of eminence.

"Agere contra," is the winning principle against sloth, and discouragement, and human respect. The more your efforts in the contrary direction stiffen your resistance and speed up your energy, the less you will perceive yourself to be tempted to sloth.

Finally, through what might seem to be a contradiction, the very multiplying of opportunities of today is an enemy to eminence. If some priests had fewer chances of service, they would be more excellent. The work they have to do distracts them and diverts their energy. By undertaking too many things, they arrive at not doing anything well.

The principle of selection and proportion is the answer to this difficulty. When you find yourself carrying on your work without any perspective, doing

little things as though they were important things, and neglecting important things for the sake of little things, then you may be sure that you are not traveling the road of eminent service.

It is always true that a man has often to give up nonessentials in order to perform essentials. Look at your work squarely and see what you can just as well leave undone and what it is important for you to do. You will find that the pleasant things are not always the momentous things, that you have to give up many congenial pursuits in order to strive for eminence.

Prudent Selection

Against distraction and dissipation of mind you will have to gain a calm, selective, and prudent avoidance of nonessential things for the sake of the essential things. When St. Francis de Sales found himself in the midst of courts and of princes, he still insisted on preaching every day while in Paris, because he considered the eagerness of the people to hear his words was an indication of the will of God. Many a day he had to put aside the hospitalities of the courtiers, to deny himself interesting conversations, in order to mount the pulpit.

So, also, during his early years as missionary in the Chablais, he wrote many little pamphlets and spread them about. How many other interesting and useful occupations he had to put aside in order to give himself to this labour of composition! Yet the fruits of his preaching and writing remain when these other things would have been long forgotten.

The Curé d'Ars had received from God, special graces for the ministry of the confessional. How many hours each day he spent in that humble occupation. Great personages waited to speak with him, important literary characters came to see him. They would have liked very much to entertain him with intellectual discourses, but the good, old man, with his limbs cramped and his head throbbing, would sit for many hours a day, day after day, in the darkness of the confessional, and would listen to his visitors only when they came to pour out their soul in the tribunal of penance.

The Many Sacrifices

Any man who has achieved the service of eminence, has had to make many such sacrifices. For the sake of the work for which God's Providence destined him, he had to put aside many less necessary things, good in themselves. So you, also, withersoever your priestly ministry may be directed, can solve the difficulties and overcome the obstacles which spring from your work and its distractions, by considering which way God's will lies, where He desires your most fruitful ministry, and then by observing the principle of proportion and making the necessary sacrifices.

To sum up, then, this principle of priestly ambition, this zeal for the service of eminence, is of immense importance and sublime significance to every priest. Whether our ways are laid in humble or exalted places, whether our talents are great or small,

we can achieve the service of eminence by doing excellently the daily tasks which God desires.

For this is necessary above all, that we have a great spiritual ambition to be like unto Christ. It is necessary, too, that we cultivate our intellectual ambition along the lines of our calling, necessary that we be able to overcome human respect, distractions, and discouragements. Let us pray for ourselves and for each other that we may have such an ambition, as great, as pure, as unselfish, and as strongly motived by God's love, as the Sacred Heart of Jesus desires.

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